

Chapter 29: Train, Play, and Eat Breakfast

The battle training had been going on for a while. Atlas cast a few more fireballs at the silver dragoness. Juna's eyes open were wide as the spells hit their mark, creating a black smoggy fog. The sound of shallow beating wings in the fog as it spiraled to the sound of the wings. The smell of scorch flesh filled the air with its horrible smell. When the fog lifted, Juna was in halfling form in a ball form with what left of her silver dress, which was burnt away from the magic. Her legs were curled up against her chest and her arms protect her head and chest the best she could, but they had burn marks over her arms, legs and her wings. Atlas knew that humans loved to wear clothes, but never understood why they felt the need to cover their privates or make their nudity taboo. Dragons and animals were always comfortable without covering themselves up, but humans were an exception. It was even stranger how Juna, who was really a dragon, would need to hide herself like that. She's not even human or halfling, no matter what she looks like, for Pete's sake.

"Damn. I guess Axle was right about you," Juna sounded exhausted and in pain. Her legs fell down from her chest and her arms fell back to her side. She looked over at the white dragon and yelled, "Axle, I'm done. I conclude that she is worth training, but we are short on time." She took down to the forest below and was shortly followed by Axle, who transformed into a human on ground.

He said something back up to Mekarth and Atlas, "Well, I guess that point's been proven. I guess it's time to get started then; for real this time, so you're going to be on solid ground now."

Atlas raised a brow and asked, "Wait, that was a test?"

Mekarth simply grinned a bit at the woman. "Well, there's your answer. He needed the approval of the elder to train an outsider. Sorry about lying to you back there, but we need to see how much you are willing to put into this training, or what you could still learn," he said as he started a slow decent down. "It's nothing to do against you, but Shadow Wind lords have their own training styles and require the approval of the eldest in their group to train them. And the fact Juna is a little over 500, so she falls under the eldest of us three, which means we need her approval to teach you."

The woman said, "A secret training, huh? No wonder, why what we did looked strange." Then she thought about the human transformation spell she told Aeolus about and thought, *'So that's why Juna was upset about me telling him. That spell must have been one of those things only the dragon lords can learn.'* But then she quickly remembered that one must need an approval of the elder first before an outsider can learn. *'No wait, it might not be a secret at all. Otherwise, Axle wouldn't have told me it,'* she thought. But she still wasn't sure about that as she continued thinking, *'Oh gosh, I'm so confused. I need to ask Mekarth.'* Looking down at the black dragon, she asked, "Say, about that human transformation spell. Is that another secret that only the dragon lords should know?"

Mekarth simply laughed a bit, "No the spell is pretty common and Axle more likely taught it to you to

help you protect your family." The black dragon seemed calmed as he landed on the ground.

"Oh good, because for a moment, I'd thought I'd--" Atlas quickly stopped running her mouth before she said anything about being in trouble for telling Aeolus the spell. "Uh... teach my nieces how to transform." She wasn't sure if telling Mekarth about the horde leader would garner some trouble, but she decided not to mention him just in case.

Then they saw Axle was healing Juna's wounds. The halfling seemed to have no problem with being nude and Axle seemed to not have a problem with it. "There, you should be fine now," Axle calmly said as Juna simply rubbed her arm and simply turned to her dragon form and started to leave. She stopped and looked at Mekarth, who let Atlas down from his back. Then the black dragon left with his sister.

After Bam finished eating his breakfast of fruits and a monkey, the navy blue dragon noticed the Firestar sisters eating their meals. Bam, who was very fond of hatchlings, decided to go over to them and meet them. As soon as he reached them, the sisters looked up at the dragon who smiled gleefully and greeted, "Hey there, you must be Atlas's girls. I'm Bam, Aeolus's cousin. What are your names?"

The whiptail hatchling replied, "I'm Danielle."

"And I'm Kywie," said the balloon hatchling who spoke after her sister.

Bam complimented, "Danielle and Kywie, what cute names for cute little hatchlings like you." The sisters smiled and giggled in response. Then he asked, "So what's your aunt like? Is she nice and taking good care of you?"

"Yep!" the whiptail hatchling replied. "She brings us back food when we're hungry."

Kylie added, "And she keeps us safe from bad guys."

The navy blue was glad that they had a good caretaker and said, "Ah, she sounds like a good parent you have. Does she play with you, too?"

Danielle shook her head and answered, "Nah, not really. She just wets me and Kywie away together."

"Oh, okay," replied the navy blue. He thought of Atlas with a slight disapproval, '*What a boring dragoness.*' Although he respected Atlas for feeding and protecting them; he felt that she was flawed for not playing with her nieces. He knew that every hatchling deserved some fun, too. So since the magi never played with the hatchlings, Bam decided he was going to make up for that by interacting with them. "Hey, want to play a game?" he asked.

"Yes!" both sisters cried in an excited joy.

"Great!" Bam exclaimed happily. "How about we play a game of Tag? You ever played that before?" he asked.

The sisters shook their heads as they both said simultaneously, "No."

Seeing how the hatchlings were new to the game, the navy blue dragon explained the rules of the game, "Okay, here's how it goes. One of us will be "it" and the it-dragon has to touch the others to make him "it". The ones who aren't "it" have to run away so that they don't become "it". Get it?"

Danielle and Kylie nodded their heads understandingly and answered, "Yes!"

"Okay then, let's get started," Bam replied. He decided to make his move first by selecting one of the sisters to be "it". He touched Danielle on the maw with his toe and declared, "Tag, you're it!" Then he and Kylie started to run away as they laughed.

"Hey, get back here!" the whiptail squealed. She ran after the two dragons to tag one of them. After Bam and Kylie split up, Danielle went after her sister, since she was slower than the navy blue dragon. Danielle got closer to the balloon hatchling before she pounced on her to the ground. "Tag, you're it!" the whiptail exclaimed triumphantly.

Now with Kylie being "it", the balloon hatchling began to chase after her sister and the navy blue dragon. However, since she was running on two legs and they on four legs, the hatchling was too slow to catch either of them. Kylie started to feel a pang of frustration and felt that this was going to be impossible. Bam saw her clenching frown and decided to go easy on the balloon. He faked his exhaustion and panted, "Oh no... I'm too tired to run anymore. I sure hope Kylie doesn't tag me."

Taking advantage of the adult's mercy, Kylie went over to his leg and touched it. "Tag, you're it!" she squealed. Then she ran away from the navy blue. Bam went after the sisters, but held his speed back to make it look like they were faster than him and to boost their self-esteem.

After each careful analysis, Minerva decided to go with the large building that used to be a fitness center. *'That looks like a fine place for a school. I wonder if Ronan agrees with me,'* she thought. After writing down the page's URL on paper, the woman decided to take a break from searching. She needed to eat some breakfast for energy or she probably wouldn't concentrate much. So she left her room to go downstairs into the kitchen. There, the woman went to the freezer and took out some bacon and a ham. She knew it was courtesy to feed her guests first before herself. The ham was going to be fed to Drake, but since the meat was frosted with ice, Minerva would have to defrost the ice first before warming it up in the oven. So she left the ham on the empty sink under the sun's light that glared through the

window. In the meantime, she would have to fix breakfast for Ronan and herself. She turned the dial on the oven and pre-heated it to 350°F. Then she took out the bacon rack from the drawer of the oven and placed it on the counter. Next, she opened the bacon package and took out the strips to put on the rack. After that, she went to get the ingredients ready for pancakes, while she waited for the heat to get to where it's at. She went to the cupboard and took out a box of pancake mix. Then she went to the bottom cupboard and took out a bowl to mix the ingredients in. Afterwards, Minerva went to the drawer next to the bottom cupboard and took out the wire whisk. She placed the three things on the other side of the sink and opened the pancake mix's box and bag to pour the cream-colored flour into the bowl. She went back to the cupboard and took out the measuring cup. After she filled it with water from the sink and pour it into the mix, the oven started beeping to indicate the temperature has reached its designated point. The woman put the measuring cup aside and went to put the bacon rack into the oven to cook.

While the bacon cooked, Minerva mixed the pancake mix until it turned into batter. Then she took out the frying pan from the cupboard and put it on the stove. She took a big metal spoon and poured one scoop of the batter onto the frying pan to bake. She went to get the spatula and a plate to put next to the stove, and waited for the batter to finish its first side. After a while, the woman took the spatula and flipped the pancake to its other side to be just as brown as the first side. Once it was done baking, the woman removed the pancake from the pan and put it on the plate to cool. Then she went to work on the second pancake and then the following others after that. Between working on the pancakes, Minerva checked on the bacon from time to time to see if they were ready yet. After all the foods were baked and cooked, Minerva turned off the oven and took out the bacon rack to place on the stove. Then she grabbed another big plate and put the crisp bacon onto it. With two foods done, the woman went to cook the third and final part of the breakfast meal, turkey sausages. She took them out of the refrigerator and placed them onto the frying pan. After letting them cook, she turned off the stove and put them onto the third big plate. After putting the bacon rack and frying pan into the sink, Minerva grabbed two paper plates and filled them each with two pancakes, three bacon, and two sausages. She put the plates on the table and went to go get the cups to fill them with orange juice. Then after putting the cups on the table, she put a fork and a knife next to each plate. Finally, she took out the pancake syrup and set it onto the middle of the table.

With the breakfast completed, Minerva heard a knock on the door and Ronan called, "Minerva? It's me, I'm back."

The woman went to open the door and said, "Welcome back, Ronan. Did you find the place you were looking for?"

The man made his way to the guest room to get out of his gear. Then he smirked at her and answered, "I did. There's an open plot of land a few miles away from here. Big enough that, if you can afford it, we can build a school."

"Oh that's good!" said Minerva, sounding glad for him. Then she suggested, "Well I don't really have

enough money to build it, but we can always get some loans to hire construction workers to build the place."

Then they went into the dining room where Ronan was surprised to find breakfast made for him. "Minerva, this is very kind of you, but you didn't have to make breakfast for me," he said with a smile.

The woman smiled at him and said, "But of course I have to do this. You can't start off a day on an empty stomach, can you?"

Ronan replied gratefully, "Minerva, I've never had someone treat me so well in a long time. Thank you... for everything."

The woman felt delighted and said, "You're welcome, Ronan. You definitely need it after all you went through." Then suddenly, the telephone started ringing for Minerva to come and pick it up. "I'll be right back," she told the man before she went over to the telephone and answered it. "Hello?"

Her boss, Richard, said to her, *"Good morning, Minerva. I have a few tasks for you to do today."*

"Yes, I'm listening," the woman said as she was eager to do what needs to be done.

The executive director told her, *"Okay then. Today, I would like for you to write an article about our dragon literacy program we started today and another on the magic masters teaching magic at the city hall. Be sure to explain how these will help dragons and build a bridge between our species and theirs."*

Minerva went over to the oven to check on the ham as she replied, "I understand, Mr. Darien, I'll get to it right now." She opened the oven's door and put on an oven mitt.

The man wasn't done speaking yet as he had more to say, *"Also, when you're done with these articles, feel free to download and print copies of the flyer for our program and post them all over the city. Thank you and have a good day!"*

"You too, sir," Minerva replied as she took out the ham and placed it on the stove. She pushed the hang-up button on the phone and put it on the counter. *'Wow, I sure have a lot to do today,'* she thought. The woman took a steak knife and sunk it into the ham. Then she pulled it out and touched the hot blade that stung her tips with heat. The food was fully-cooked, so she turned off the oven and closed the door. She looked over at Ronan, who was sitting at the table, and asked, "Hey Ronan, do you think that Drake will like this ham?"

The man chuckled and commented, "Oh yeah, he'll eat it. He's taken a whole cow, ripped it in two and eaten it without cooking before."

Minerva grinned in amusement and joked, "Oh my, what a beast! I can't wait to see what he'll do with this poor ham here." She looked down at the meat for a bit before looking back at Ronan and saying, "Well, I might as well take it over to him now." Then she took out a hard plate from the top cupboard and placed the ham on it. Then she went out the backdoor with the plate in hand and walked over to the dragon. "Here you go, Drake. I cooked this up for you for breakfast. It's probably not much, but I have food I need to save before I go grocery shopping again," she said.

Drake smiled and asked, "Thank you Minerva. Your kindness is rare among humans. I've been observing you and Ronan talking. Seems like you managed to release a lot of the pent up tension inside of him. Has he told you of his past yet? His life before he became the warrior is he today?"

Minerva recalled to the best of her memory what she learned about Ronan and answered, "Well he did tell me about his teacher who taught him how to fight. He was kind, just like me. He even showed me his many scars, told me how some people died in his fights, and how he had run-ins with the law before." She omitted the man's tragic childhood and his revenge on the mafia who kidnapped her as Drake had been there when his friend told her the story of his past at the carnival. "That's all I know," she finished.

The dragon smirked and said, "If he's told you that much, then it is clear he is fond of you." He rested his head down on his claws. "Ronan has a gentle heart, but the world has covered that with a rough exterior. If you've learned as much as you have about him and if you've shared the same amount with him, I wouldn't be surprised about anything."

Minerva smiled gleefully and said, "Well I suppose that would be fair. Maybe I could start talking about myself at the table. I just have to figure out how to start this off first. Any suggestions, Drake?"

Drake laughed and told her, "My dear Minerva, I've lived over three hundred years and seen more romances than you could dream of, and through all I've learned there remains one consistent fact. If you like Ronan, and I bet deep down he has feelings for you, you have to find your own way. Love is a tricky thing. Trust me. You'll know what to do." He winked at her before shutting his eyes to rest.

The woman blushed red on her cheeks. "Me and Ronan, together? But we've only known each other for two days and today. How can he fall in love with me?" she asked before she quickly realized something. "Oh wait, he must be having a crush." She figured that must be because of how nicer she was compared to most of everybody else he's met before. "And to be honest, I also have a crush on him," she admitted. Since it went both ways, the woman figured that she could give her hero a chance at forming a relationship. "Well, I should be going back inside now. I can't keep your friend waiting," she said. Then Minerva went back inside the house and sat at the table with Ronan who then made a smirk. She noticed he hasn't touched his food yet. She smiled a bit amused and thought, *'Looks like he doesn't want to start without me.'*

The man gave her a small chuckle and said, "I was being polite; besides, I didn't want to eat alone."

Minerva picked up the fork and took up a piece of the scrambled egg. After she ate it, she spoke to the man, "So can I tell you more about my job?"

Ronan ate and answered, "Certainly. I am curious about this 'organization' that is supportive of dragons. Never met one anywhere else on my travels."

Minerva began to talk about the ADR, "Okay, so like I said, ADR is a dragon rights organization. I work for them as a journalist intern. Any events that happen related slavery, dragons, and our goals, I write them up in the computer so that they put these news on their website. Today, my boss called me to write down news about the city hall's magic learning program; you know, the place where I learned how to do water magic." She ate another piece of the scramble eggs, before continuing, "And he also gave me the option of printing PDFs of the flyers and place them all over the city. They're advertising a dragon literacy program to help dragons and halflings learn how to read. It's a program that they're going to start soon this week."

The man replied in a fascinated tone, "Interesting. You know, I don't think I've ever known a human that could do magic. Sounds a little outside my league. With so much persecution going on for dragons and those friendly to dragons, it's surprising that no one has attacked the city hall in protest against their magic teaching."

"I've never heard of humans doing magic either," said the woman. "I was surprised when I saw a woman using magic to rebuild the city to normal, and that was before the city hall started the magic learning programs. Anyway, I think a lot of people are more excited about learning to do magic than they are hating dragons. That's probably why there haven't been any protests over there yet." It was probably a good thing as this will give people and dragons a chance to better understand each other while learning together as students.

Ronan nodded and said, "As long as it keeps their minds occupied and the protesters quiet, I'm all for it." He finished up his breakfast rather quickly with the other being done a few minutes later. "Minerva... I thank you for helping me with the school. It's not going to be easy to establish it though. A lot of work has to go into it. You know, I was thinking..... maybe you could be co-founder. You can run the financials and business aspects of the school, and I can focus on teaching. You don't have to if you don't want to."

The woman smiled and said, "Oh Ronan, I would be honored to. Though I'll admit that I don't know how to run the financials. But maybe some research on the computer can help me learn how to do this." The only things she knew about running financials were recording sales and counting money. The business part she knew was advertising, but she may have to hire a graphic designer for that.

Ronan smiled back and replied, "Fantastic! We should get to work on this as soon as possible. The sooner we start the sooner we can get construction designs established and have the school built."

"Right, I'll go look up online to see what we can do first," said Minerva.

Then the man said, "To show you my gratitude for everything you've done and are going to do.... allow me the honor of escorting you out to dinner tonight." He was undeniably asking her out on a date. Then he stated, "Though I have no formal attire except my robes."

The woman was excited with joy at the man's generosity. She beamed, "Oh Ronan, that would be so wonderful! And don't worry; I don't mind what you were as long as we're on a date."

Ronan replied, "Wonderful... I-I'll um... I'll go look for a place to eat." He got up and went upstairs.

"Okay, I can't wait to see what you have in mind," Minerva said. Then, she picked up the plates, cups, and utensils and put them into the sink to wash. She scrubbed off every stain, crumb, and little food pieces with the green & yellow sponge. Once everything was washed, she put them in the dish drainer to dry. Then she went upstairs to her room to get started on the news article she is to work on until Ronan gets back. She sat at the laptop, logged in to ADR's website and started writing down the article. Minerva worded each sentence in the article carefully to make the news informative as she can and not just emotional-appeal. She even put the image of an elemental master teaching his students at the city hall on top of the article with a caption below it.

Axle came away from the tree he was leaning on and picked up a pine cone. "So, where to start you? I know," he said calmly as he walked closer to Atlas. He gripped tight on the pine cone, crushing it a bit in his hand. "Rules, no magic or changing forms. Everything else is allowed. This set of rules apply to all training styles and including me. Let me just say this; 'when a creature is faced against death, they can do anything they thought would be impossible before'," he said coldly, almost as if he was trying to tell her something that would be of great help later in the future. Atlas figured that he was talking about foes like Spinx and Dracul, like if they would resort to surprise attacks. The woman looked serious and understood risks that may show up in the future. "We will start off by you just simply walking and running." He showed how to walk and then run. "Now you try," he said. Atlas did her best to mimic his moment. She walked a bit more normally like a human this time, but still remained careful about she moved. The man simply watched her from a distance. "Your walking needs a little bit more work, and let the movement flow more freely. Let it come more naturally," Axle told her as he still kept a watchful eye on her progress.

This time Atlas put aside her vigilance and moved around. It went fine without any problems at all. Now being used to walking, the woman thought about increasing her pace a little bit to see if she can walk just as fine like that. She went a bit faster this time to try it out. Again, no trouble at all. Wanting to know if she had walked right, she asked, "Hey Axle, how did I do?"

The man nodded in approval and told her, "Now you have walking down, we can try running. I will show

you, but I must warn you, you won't be able to run for long. Your human form will not be used to it." He grinned a bit as he soon went into a full sprint and was soon gone in the trees, almost like he vanished among the trees.

Atlas decided to show him that she would be just as good as him. "Hah, we'll see about that!" she said. The woman dashed after him through the woods. But it didn't take too long for her to trip over a tree trunk. "Whoa!" she shouted before she fell down on her face. She got dirt in her mouth and spat out it out in distaste.

Axle went over to her and just hummed a bit as he reached his hand out for her. "You still have to watch your footing still and what is coming-" he said as he grinned a bit, "And I don't think the dirt will be a very useful as a food source."

Atlas took his hand and was helped up onto her feet. "Yeah, no kidding," she replied. She hoped that she would never have to taste that again. Getting ready to move, the woman said, "Right, I'm going to try this again. Raaahh!" Then she started running again.