

Chapter 32: The Gallion Clan

After saving Henry and fighting off the horde attacking him, Atlas warped back to the lake to get her armor. When she got there, she had found the whole place to be devoid of a single dragon. *'Huh, I guess they've went training in the woods,'* she thought. Standing next to her armor, she warped back to the spring cave next.

Aeolus, Kekul, and Cirrus warped into a rain forest. The horde leader looked at his surroundings, noticing a familiar clan emblem he hadn't seen in a long time engraved on some trees. It was the mark of the Gallion clan. The leader looked at the nearest tree's emblem as he thought, *'These woods, is this my clan's new home?'* After his capture and enslavement, the clan's former territory had been deforested to make way for new buildings, including a factory. It had been another strike on the disaster dragon, knowing that he would never see the beautiful forest of his birth again. This new territory he was in was different compared to the deciduous woods he once lived in, but habitat was just as beautiful with the lush green leaves and vibrant crystals.

His wonder was suddenly interrupted by Juna asking him, *'Who are your best mages with earth magic? This is big enough for a med section of the city. We will need to create the city by detail so nothing is forgotten.'*

Aeolus answered, *'As far as I know, it's Enamora and Sargoth. These two have earth magic.'* Did Juna just suddenly change her mind about not wanting to train the horde? If so, then this felt like a lucky change. But then again, it was probably meant for Baltia only. The horde leader looked forward to see what she was learning from this later.

Surrounding the horde members were various dragons of different breeds staring at these intruders. A phoenix dragon said to a green dragon with a lilac underbelly, "Gneiss, we got visitors."

Gneiss turned away from the tapir he was eating and to see the newcomers. To his surprised, he recognized the disaster dragon. Getting up, he said with a smile, "Well look who it is. It's my ol' cousin, Aeolus."

A pink dragon and a few others looked at Gneiss curiously and asked, "You know this dragon?"

One of the navy blue dragonesses recognized the name as well and said, "Aeolus; that's the son of Niccolo, our late chief." Aeolus looked around at all the dragons in his old home. Some of them were true members of the Gallion clan, while the others were outsiders that Gneiss must have taken into the clan.

A winter dragon beside her asked, "What about the others? Are they members of the clan, too?"

"No they're not," Aeolus answered. "Not yet, anyway. These two are part of my horde known as the Vulture Horde. I'll only bring them into our clan after they have proven themselves worthy in our global campaign."

"Campaign?" Gneiss asked as he looked at his relative strangely. "Are you going around the world to destroy all humans?" he asked.

"I am," answered the disaster dragon. "But it's on hold for now as I need to an ancient Rudvichan city of a wicked lord." He explained how he got caught up in Axle's affairs, starting with the encounter of Dracul up to the present point. "So now I come to you, my brethren, in hopes of bringing you and the others into my horde. Having two dragons with earthquake powers would be better than one as the both of us will a great deal of damage to our enemies. Together, we will stand a better chance against Dracul's forces and the large army of humans," he said, trying to convince the green dragon.

Gneiss thought about Aeolus's proposal as he gave him a fair warning, "Well Aeolus, I'd sure like to join the horde, but you do realize that I have rebuilt this clan first and have taken leadership of it. Since you are part of our clan, you would have to be subordinate to me. If I were to join this horde of yours, that means I'll have to take control of it." The green dragon was right about that; he joins and Aeolus forfeits his leadership of the Vulture Horde. This was not something he wanted to happen as he had no idea how the horde would fare under Gneiss or if he would bring it to its downfall. The disaster dragon thought of himself as being the perfect leader as he had the brains and smarts to rule. Luckily, there was a solution to this problem.

The horde leader challenged the chief, "Then it looks like I'll have to duel you for leadership of this clan. Gneiss, I challenge you to a fight."

The green dragon smiled in acceptance to the challenge. He said, "Okay then, let's see what you got!" The clan and the horde members backed off and formed a circle around Aeolus and Gneiss. The former lunged at the latter and bit him in the shoulder. But the hide that the disaster dragon was biting felt a bit tough. The green dragon grinned and said, "Nice try, but you should know that I'm part geode, which make my scales tougher." Then he swiped at claw at Aeolus's face, causing the horde leader to wince in pain and let go. Gneiss followed up by pinning his cousin down, but then the latter blew his lightning breath at him. The green dragon snarled from the damage he took as he pulled away from Aeolus.

Aeolus got back up as he pushed his opponent away. Afterwards, he blew more lightning at Gneiss and made him fell over in pain. Smoke rose from the burned wounds on the scales that the horde leader's breath had touched. The green dragon winced and a few let out quieted grunts. Aeolus stood over his cousin and asked, "Give up?"

Gneiss looked at him defiantly and shouted, "Never! I won't give up leadership this easily."

"I'd figure as much," the horde leader replied. Then the chief used his magic to raise a slab under Aeolus at a hard and fast pace. Taking advantage of the horde leader's surprise, Gneiss then blew rocks at him and pelted the disaster dragon's head and chest.

"Grk!" Aeolus winced from the damage he took. After the rocks stopped hitting him, the horde leader got a headache and started seeing stars in everywhere. He also saw Gneiss jumping at him and pushing him over with his claws on the horde leader's scales. The chief swiped at his cousin's head with the swing of his claws, bringing scars on Aeolus's neck and face. Then the slashing stopped, but just before the horde leader can react, his cousin blew other breath of rocks at him again. The disaster dragon shut his eyes tightly as he got damaged by the little hard stones falling on him. To save himself, Aeolus used his hindlegs and kicked off Gneiss on his underbelly before blowing lightning at him as he got up.

At the same time, the chief also blew more rocks at him. The two breaths went through each other; the rocks pelted Aeolus and the lightning bolt shot into Gneiss's mouth. The electric shock inside the moist cavern intensified the pain as the chief's red eyes went wide and he fell over paralyzed. Aeolus's head spun in both pain and dizziness before his vision finally cleared. He looked at his opponent who appeared to be stiff with smoke coming out of his mouth. Everybody watched Gneiss curiously as they waited for him to get up, but no move was made. A canopy dragoness asked quietly, "Is he going to get up?"

The dark purple-winged geode dragon beside her answered, "I'm not sure. But it looks like he's not breathing."

Aeolus went over to his cousin and looked down at him in concern. He was also careful as to be prepared for any surprise attacks that may come from his cousin. The disaster dragon asked, "Gneiss?" He placed his claw on the chief's chest to feel for his heart. Not a single beat was felt. Aeolus's lightning had stopped his heart. The disaster dragon tensed with shock; he never intended to murder his cousin, especially not in front of the other dragons who saw him as leader. This was bad; if he doesn't do something to save Gneiss's life, then his clan would turn on him and cast him out. His chances at recruitment would be ruined.

The whole clan started to get worried as one of the clan dragons asked the horde leader, "Aeolus, what's going on? Is he dead?"

Aeolus remained silent as he calmed down and tried to find a solution to fix this. He recalled humans using things like shock therapy and CPR to get a heart beating again like normal. He decided to try the former on Gneiss using his lightning breath. He turned the green dragon over and blew a small jolt of lightning at the heart. The nerves reacted to the electricity as the chief jumped for a brief second. Then the chief fell back still. Aeolus tried again with a little stronger jolt this time and the same effect happened. So then he moved to CPR. He placed both paws on his cousin's heart and started to push up

and down on it. The process worked as Gneiss twitched and woke up from his unconsciousness, much to everyone's relief. He let out a quieted groan and asked, "What just happened?"

The horde leader answered, "Your heart stopped after my lightning breath zapped your mouth. I had to push down on it a lot to bring you back." Then he apologized, "I'm sorry for getting you nearly killed."

"Is that so?" asked Gneiss. He immediately formed a smile and said, "Well then I guess this makes you a winner." Aeolus felt triumph over being declared the victor of the duel. Now he was leading two groups of dragons as planned. The green dragon looked at his clanmates and told them, "Everyone, Aeolus is now your new chief. Let's all bow before him." So the whole clan closed their eyes, knelt down, and bowed to the horde leader.

Kekul and Cirrus smiled with praise for their leader as the latter congratulated, "Way to go, Aeolus."

Aeolus smiled with pride at the gray dragon before Cirrus went to heal the two cousins. The horde leader looked at all his clan members and ordered them, "Rise." All the dragons stood back up and waited to hear what their new chief would say next. Aeolus turned to his cousin and told him, "Now Gneiss, I noticed that half of these dragons aren't original members of our clan. If I am to take them into my horde, then I need to know who all of them are."

"Oh these guys?" said the green dragon as he looked at them. Looking back at the horde leader, he explained fondly, "They're all fellow slaves of mines. We worked together under the same master. They were really swell dragons, so I thought I'd bring them into the clan with me." Aeolus had also noticed that some of the former slaves were breeds with no special powers. He made a disapproving frown and was about to call out Gneiss for bringing in weak dragons. But then the cousin saw the look and explained, "Hey, don't get mad. They may seem unqualified for our clan, but these guys make up for strength in other ways that benefit the clan. Come on, I'll show you to them."

The horde leader followed his cousin to the nearest dragon, who was pink in color. Gneiss introduced him, "This is Cerise, our baby-sitter of the clan. He's really good with hatchlings and takes care of them while their mothers hunt. He may not look much, but he's pretty durable. He took out a whole pack of wolves that were trying to eat our young by himself." Cerise made a small smile and mouthed a "hello".

Aeolus was a bit impressed with the pink dragon, but there was something else he needed to know about him. "And what are his powers?" he asked.

"Just his fire breath," answered Gneiss. Now that was certainly not enough to be in the horde. Aeolus would rather keep the pink dragon as the baby-sitter of the clan instead. Besides, he needed someone to look out for his territory while he was gone.

The horde leader said, "Okay then. Take me to the next dragons, please."

The two walked over to a pair of male phoenix dragons, who watched them come. The former chief said, "These brothers here are Sunburn and Dresden. Their powers are as fiery as their personalities."

"Hi!" greeted one of the brothers.

The other one said, "How are you doing?"

"Good," said Aeolus simply. Then the cousins went over to a black dragon with a purple face. This dragon appeared to be calm and serious look to him.

Gneiss introduced him in a fond tone, "This dragon here is my right-hand fellow here named Concetto. He's a soldier dragon." Aeolus knew about the breed of soldier dragons. Soldier dragons were known for their excellent fighting skills, courage, and strong loyalty to those they served. They would gladly give their lives to their leaders. This breed would be useful to the horde.

The soldier dragon bowed to the new chief and said, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Aeolus."

"Likewise, Concetto," replied the horde leader. "I would be happy to have you in the horde."

The cousins went on to the next dragon, who was a purple dorsal eating a twig with some berries on it. Gneiss said, "And this is Dorcus; he's a really strong fire breath on par with a red dragon's."

"That's a bit impressive," commented Aeolus. Well not really, the horde leader would rather have him stay here at home.

The next dragons they went to were a couple of canopy females and a pair of charcoal-black dragons. The green dragon said to his cousin, "Aeolus, meet these canopy dragonesses: Legia and Hippie. They're really good scouts."

"Hey!" greeted the smiling dragonesses. One of them was your typical-looking canopy and the other had the light gray color of a wind dragon. For all he knew, she was probably part-wind.

Gneiss continued on with the other pair, "And these charcoal dragons are Onslou and Umdomiel; they're mates whose powders help to blend us with the darkness." The charcoals made shy smiles at their new chief.

Aeolus looked at them, feeling charcoals' black powder would benefit the horde at night. He asked his cousin, "We got quite a few interesting dragons here, cousin. Anyone else?"

"Just three more," answered the green dragon. They looked to the winter dragon across them and Gneiss said, "That dragon over there is Lythnara. The dragonesses think that he's a handsome fellow and I can't blame them for it." The horde leader thought about including the winter dragon into the horde as

he had no ice-type dragon in his group. Then Gneiss looked to the last two members and said, "And finally, we have Plopsy the gold-horned tangar and Fabre the crystal-maker." The gold-horned tangar was with her hatchling, who was watching Fabre swirling icy wind around the crystal before producing a tiny firework-like explosion above. The entertained hatchling smiled in joy.

Aeolus looked at the crystal-maker and thought, *'Another useful dragon. Having a crystal-maker to produce traps and weapons for the horde would benefit us.'*

Gneiss looked back at his cousin and asked, "So dear cousin, did you like our new members?"

"I do," the horde leader answered. "They are useful in their own ways, but I will only take those with the most useful abilities into the horde. Everyone else is going to stay here and guard our territory while we're gone." Aeolus rejoined his horde soldiers and looked at the clan. He told them, "Listen up Gallion clan, now that I'm chief of this clan. I will be taking all of us into my horde, but with a few exceptions. Dorcus, Plopsy, Legia, Hippie, Cerise, and the navy blue dragons will stay here to guard our woods and alert us of any unwanted intruders." He then told them that they'll be going over to the desert to train and that they must keep their goals a secret from Atlas and her dragon lord friends. "Now if no one has any questions, we shall be going to the desert now." The horde leader looked at Kekul and told him, "Take us back there now." The magi obliged and warped all the horde members, both old and new, to the desert.

A bright flash appeared at the interior of the spring cave, revealing the wounded magi dragoness. "Hey Axle, I'm back! I took care of that hybrid bastard. Sent him way up in the sky so he can fall down dead," boasted Atlas at Axle who was now in human form. She imagined the hybrid falling all the way down to the ground where his bones would break from collision of either the hard ruins or the ground. She knew it was easy victory for her as no land-dweller would survive a height like that.

But then the magi's triumph soon turned into anger when she heard that her enemy had survived. *'Let me know when you can actually challenge me you brainless bird. That was pathetic,'* he scolded over a telepathic link.

Looks like her job wasn't done yet, she needed to go back there and continue the fight. *'Grr! You want a real challenge?! Fine, I'll give you a real challenge,'* Atlas yelled back telepathically. Then she looked to the dragon-turned-man and told him, "Axle, heal me now! That damn half-breed is still alive!"

Axle did not look at her as he replied, "No, I will not."

The magi shouted in disbelief, "What?!"

Then the man snarled without looking at her, "It's a waste of energy just to heal and then to re-heal

again. I will only heal you once you're done." He stood up on the edge still overlooking the forest. "Let me tell you why you won't win, Atlas," Axle started to say as he turned his head barely so the corner of his blue eyes could be seen. "You went in there blindly."

The magi defended her action, "Hey, I had to kill that half-breed scum, because he's killed many dragons before. He even told me this himself. As long as he lives, he'll continue to take many victims. Hell, I'll even bet that brother doesn't do anything to stop him." She assumed the white-maned hybrid was probably involved in these killings, too. Why else would he defend his brother, despite knowing that he's a murderer? Atlas growled and thought, *'I should have tried to kill that one, too.'*

The man turned his full attention to the dragoness and snarled back at her, "You disregarded those that rely on you by just going in there blinded by rage and anger." Atlas's eyes shifted to the ground and she growled, not at Axle, but rather at herself for not thinking about him and her nieces. She had done it again. The man continued scolding, "Also if I remember correctly, you just left as soon as you heard a hybrid try to kill a dragon, who let me remind you, lived. You going off just to take revenge for another against a couple of murderers for that reason means you care, however lack a brain. Let me tell you something; by you blindly just jumping into a fight, you run the risk of losing everything." Axle took a breath afterwards before he turned away from her. It seemed to have bothered him more than anything else. "I don't know the whole reason why you went or what for, but you went there too quickly and without help," Axle said in a calmer tone than before.

At this point, the magi calmed down into regret for her behavior. "I-I'm sorry, Axle," she apologized. Perhaps, now was a good time to tell her about her history with the hybrids. "It's just that my sister got killed by fiends like them. Fiends who would bully and torture her at the lab where they were created." She bared her teeth at the memories of all that Flarina had told her about the lab. Then she stopped baring and continued, "The worst one of them all was Ramkot, whom those scientists spawned him from her. He and his gang of hybrids were the ones who killed her and left my nieces orphaned. Everyday my sister would talk about her horrid days at the lab and how she suffered from everyone there. Because of that, I hated these half-breeds for what they did. And I started to hate them more after Flarina's death." She turned around and walked towards the cavern wall where she faced it with her head down. "We were supposed to live together in freedom after the Spell. Me, her, her mate John, and the hatchlings." At this point, tears started to form in her eyes. "I was supposed to meet my new family until those freaks came and took their lives away." She choked, trying not to sob around Axle, and continued, "Now because of them, I'll never be able to see my sister again." After two tears fell down, she lifted her head back up and growled, "And that is why I'll never forgive these half-breeds for all they've done." Then she whipped her head around and snarled, "I'll always hate those little bastards no matter what!"

The man turned around and went up to Atlas's side with an understanding look on his face. He walked over to her and placed his hand on her leg. "I'm sorry about what happened, and I'm sorry for what I said," Axle sadly said.

Atlas replied, "Now you know why I had to keep them from killing others."

The man turned his head to her injured body and sighed a bit. "Well might as well get to work now. To let you know, this is going to hurt because first I need to remove the ice and the obsidian as well," he told her.

The magi told him, "I will get rid of the ice. You just take out the obsidian." Then Axle stepped away as she used her fire magic to melt the ice off her body. Then he went back to her and removed some of the obsidian with ease. The other chunks needed removal from a knife he pulled out. Its shiny ruby red blade glimmered in the sunlight, almost looking like a gem, but yet its metal coldness could be felt, almost like ice. The dragoness winced as the blade touched her flesh. She resisted moving as she would make it harder for the dragon lord if she did. Axle took great care in removing the obsidian from Atlas. Once he was done, he placed the knife on the tip of the blade, which stood straight up on the rock, almost like it sliced its way into rock slightly. The man placed his hand on Atlas, letting the energy flow from him to her wounds to heal them, which started to close and heal almost instantly one after another. After she was fully healed, the magi looked like she was untouched in battle. She got up and said, "Thanks, Axle."

Axle removed his hand from Atlas as he picked up his ruby knife that was sticking up in the ground. He placed it back where he got it from and turn back to the magi. He asked her, "Want to train now or simple want to rest?"

Atlas answered, "I could use some training in anger management and smarts. Because if I keep rushing into things like that, then bad stuff is going to happen to us." For the sake of everyone she cared about, she needed wisdom and a cold head to keep from making rash mistakes that would endanger herself and others. She hoped Axle would have some ways to train her in these areas.

The man shook his head at the magi. "I can't really teach you how to control your anger; that is something you have to learn on your own. The one thing I can say is that each person has their own way of keeping calm. Mine is meditation, while others think of a nice place that makes them calm, like a meadow or a calm view," Axle said as he scratched his head.

Atlas was disappointed and thought, *'Well darn, looks like I'm on my own for this.'*

The man continued, "As for "smarts", there is something called using your enemy's strength for your own. Example, if you used one ice or fire breath against one another, it would have come out different than the one that happened."

The magi thought about the two hybrids and their magma and ice breaths. She can trick them into blowing their breaths at each other, but then they'd just form an obsidian that would block both ways. That trick probably won't work. But what if it was one-sided as in one brother blowing his breath at another by accident. The hybrids moved fast and had fast reflexes, which would make it easier said than

done. If there was a magic spell to beat that, the magi would surely use it. "Um, right... So what if the bad guy was really fast in both speed and reflexes?" she asked.

Axle looked a bit puzzled over the question. "Their strength is speed. Speed; yes, it gets more in combat like hits or dodges, but the problem is the energy they use to do so does not recover during battle. It's like a rabbit and a turtle. The rabbit is faster than the turtle, but once it hits its limits, it rests for a long time to recover its energy, while the turtle still has all its energy and can still keep on going farther than the rabbit could. So what you do is use their own speed against them and let them wear themselves down," he said. "There is one thing you must know. Because they are fast, it means they are more than aware of their limits, which means you must drag the battle out by enduring their hits or even blocking them. Is there anything else?" he asked.

Getting an idea of what to do next time, Atlas smiled confidently and answered, "Nah, let's just rest for now." She went over to the cliff of the cave and heard noises above her; it sounded a bit like fighting. She flew up to the cave above to see what was going on. There she saw that Garin was training Ohimia to help her become a better fighter so that she can defend herself from fiends like the hybrid brothers next time. The magi smile and thought, *'Well ain't that nice of him.'*

Aeolus and the others returned back to the desert, where the horde was still sparring. The disaster dragon told all the dragons, "Vulture Horde, desist training at once!" The dragons stopped sparring and turned to listen to their leader. Once all eyes were on him, Aeolus announced, "Everyone, I have returned with our newest recruits, the Gallion Clan." The horde looked at the clan with a bit of interest. One of them commented on how Gneiss kind of looked like the horde leader. Aeolus told them who the clan members were before asking, "So how are your spars going, everyone?"

Yopple nodded and said, "Aye, sparring is going well."

Just then, Aeolus heard Drakor telepathically speaking to him, *'Aeolus, that big cassare you brought in. He was sparring with Eatorn, but then he overdid it and wounded him badly. Worse, he didn't seem to regret his action at all.'*

The disaster dragon frowned in dismay from hearing the bad news and hearing how Yopple was careless. He asked, *'That Yopple; I told everyone not to each other like this. I'll speak to him soon. But first, how is Eatorn doing now?'*

The ember dragon replied, *'Fine; he's just been healed by Hewey.'*

Relieved, Aeolus said, *'That is good. It makes glad we have a healer in the horde.'* But even though Hewey had saved the day, Yopple still needed to be disciplined for his actions. The disaster dragon made his way over to the cassare to give him a scolding.

Yopple craned his neck and welcomed the newcomers, "Welcome, new members. Or is it too early for introduction?"

Gneiss smiled at the cassare and said, "Nah, go ahead. I need to know who we're fighting alongside with."

The cassare stood straight up and introduced himself, "Anyways, my name is Yopple. You are?"

The green dragon answered, "I'm Gneiss, the chief of Gallion clan until Aeolus won that title in a duel we just had."

The conversation stopped as soon as Yopple noticed the frown on the horde leader's face. "Is there something wrong, sir?" he asked in concern.

Aeolus was about to talk to him about the incident with Eatorn until Juna came over and told him in an uncaring tone, "Well, now that I found you. Now I need to see if you are even worthy of the Shadow Wind training. Recommend you bring five to seven 'friends' along with you and come to the cave that is close to here."

"I'll be right there," the disaster dragon said to her. Then the dragoness left for the closest cave, which seemed to go quite deep and was quite dark down its cave mouth. Looking back to the cassare with a disapproving look on his face, he scolded, "Yopple, I heard you wounded Eatorn during the spar to the point he got injured that he needed Hewey's care. I told you and the rest of the horde to fight lightly. I can't have an incapacitated dragon in the horde and I need every single one of us fit and able for our goals. Do you understand?"

Yopple simply nodded and spoke, "I was fighting lightly, sir. I apologize for any injuries."

Aeolus looked at him suspiciously; what Yopple said seemed to have contradicted Drakor's story. But he didn't decide to press matters on the issue. Instead, he gave him a stern warning, "Well make sure this doesn't happen again. Because if it does, I will take action against you."

The cassare replied, "Yes sir."

Then the horde leader turned back to his horde and spoke to them, "Vulture Horde, Juna is going to test some of us to see if we are worthy to be trained. I will pick six of us to go with me." Then he looked off into the crowd and started to call out the names, "Bam and Baltia, you two are in." The navy blue dragon went through the crowd with the dark myst following him and went to his cousin. He was eager to see what kind of testing they'll get. Aeolus looked to the others behind him and said, "Yopple, Gneiss, Concetto, and Selenite, you are also with me." Selenite was another clan-born member; she is a geode dragoness and Gneiss's mate. As for Yopple being picked, Aeolus thought to dismiss him from sparring

should he hurt another dragon in his absence away from the horde. Plus, having the cassare around will let the horde leader see what kind of dragon he really is.

Yopple smiled and got up. "'Tis a pleasure, sir," he simply said.

Then Aeolus told the horde who their next sparring partners are; the Gallion clan members were included. With the dragons now sparring against their new partners, the horde leader told his chosen group, "Let's go." He led them to the cave that Juna was in.