

Chapter 40: Another Morning

The light of dawn shown on Atlas and lit up the darkness in her eyelids. The magi opened her eyes to the brand new day and saw the vampire girl before her up in that same tree from last night. Still suspicious of the creature, Atlas looked at herself on the side to see if Violet had done anything to her since last night. Nothing changed; there was no collar on her or anything like that to weaken her. Then she looked to the other side to see if it was the same. To her surprise, she found Axle sleeping right next to her. The man rolled on his side as he slept. Somehow, he looked more at peace near Atlas than when he was up in the tree last night. The magi looked away and felt awkward about this, wondering if she should be flattered at having a male dragon sleep with her or embarrassed. Then she quickly got over the feeling and looked at the man to see if he was untouched. Just like her, nothing had happened. Looks like Violet had kept her word, but Atlas wasn't about to trust her yet. After all, it was still too early for her to tell. Mindful of Axle, the magi thought not to get up as her movement might interrupt his sleep. Then she thought about giving her nieces a good morning telepathy, but they might still be sleeping, so she decided against that, too.

About ten minutes later, Axle yawned as he got up. He rubbed his eyes before he looked up at the magi. "Morning," he said as he stood up and stretched his arms.

Atlas greeted and asked, "Morning, Axle. Did you get a good night's sleep?"

As he rubbed his eyes, the man said, "A rather more calmer night than what I had the first time I woke up at." Then he looked around for a bit before asking, "What about you, Atlas?"

The magi answered, "Well, I had a good rest. Nothing bad happening to me." She glanced at Violet for a bit before she got up. Then she asked, "So it looks like we're all okay then. Ready to move on out to Trident Mountain? We might catch some breakfast along the way." She wasn't sure how much closer they were to the mountain. But should it be very far, then they must not waste any time at all and hurry over there before it was too late.

Axle nodded his head to Atlas. "Yes," he said back to her as he changed back into his dragon form. "Violet, you're with me," he told the vampire girl as she jumped from the tree and landed on Axle's back. "Atlas, we are going to fly there to make up for time. It might still take us about 6-8 hours with flying, so we have about 2 hours of hunting for breaks," he told the magi as he ascended into the air. He was not wasting time from the looks of it.

"Got it," the magi responded. Then she flew up into the air along with him and soared over the woods. She looked at the mountain far away from her, knowing that it would get bigger in her view the closer they get to it. *'Six to eight hours? That sounds like we'll be getting there in the afternoon,'* she thought.

Aeolus was one of the first dragons to wake up. The horde leader went around his still sleeping clanmates and left the residential cave. Outside, he was greeted by Bam, who flashed a smile and said, "Good morning, cous! Did you enjoy your sleep?"

The disaster dragon answered, "I certainly did." As with every night after the Spell. With no uncomfortable floors and cages, his nights were now soft grounds and nests. Then he thought about a certain dragoness in mind and wondered if she was up. "Anyway, has Juna awoken yet?" he asked.

The navy blue dragon shook his head and answered, "Not yet, cous. I just checked the cave and she's still sleeping."

Looks like he'll have to wait some more before he hears the test's results. Aeolus replied, "I understand; after all, most of us have still yet to awaken." He'll give it an hour before everyone wakes up. The horde leader decided a way to pass the time until then and suggested, "Shall we do some hunting?"

Bam grinned like an excited hatchling and answered, "Oh yes! Let's do it!" Then the two cousins walked together to leave the village and see if there was any food out in the desert.

Before they stepped over the border of the village, the cousins heard Yopple asking, "Good morning. May I join in whatever activities you are doing?"

They turned their heads around and saw him approaching from behind. Aeolus answered, "We're going hunting. You may, if you want."

Bam smiled and said, "Great! The more, the merrier! This will make our hunts easier." That it will; with teamwork, they can have an efficient time catching lots of prey. Then they went out into the desert to find breakfast.

As they walked, Aeolus said to his subordinates, "Alright, we are going to split up and find prey in different places. Should anyone find multiple, let us know with telepathy and we'll come over to you."

"Got it!" said Bam, winking. Then the trio went their separate ways to hunt.

Minerva woke up and went downstairs to prepare breakfast. This time, it was porridge she was making with banana slices to go on top of it when it was cooked. She mixed the porridge with some honey for better taste. Near the end of being fully cooked, a sweet aroma from the breakfast made the woman want to eat it right now. After the porridge was done, she poured it in two bowls; one for herself and the other for Ronan. Then she sliced half of the banana into pieces to put on each bowl. She put the bowls on the table and then went to put the two chickens in the oven to cook for Drake. Seeing as how

the dragon would need to eat a lot for his size, the woman thought, *'Boy, I'm going to have a lot of grocery shopping to do this weekend.'*

Kathia woke up out of her bed and saw the daylight shown through the window door. It was morning now; the girl wondered how long it was going to be until the evil Spinx decided to use her against Axle. If there was some way to escape until then, she hoped that there would be enough time to find it until then. The girl thought about using her parents as spies to search to help search for a way out of here. Using the ghost summon spell, she chanted, "Spirits of my parents, come to me!" But nothing happened; no matter how much she tried, her parents never came. It seems like being in the temporal plane prevented her necromancy from working. After all, it was Spinx's domain of undead and the only undead here were his. Then a quick realization came to her head, if all these people and dragons were Spinx's minions, then that means... "Oh shoot!" whispered Kathia dreadfully. She wasn't safe after all.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the swinging of the door. The maid had returned, carrying with her some clothing, more like it was meant for a scout. She also had some light armor with her made out of some kind of leather. Its scale texture was like a dragon, but there was no dragon scale patten like it nor do they have a faint glow to it. On the top of the stack of armor and clothing was a small wrist dagger made out of a light purple metal. "Morning, Miss Kathia. These are for you. When you are done, breakfast will be downstairs in the dining hall. Master Spinx sends his regards about not coming to get you himself, but he had matters to attend to," she said as she placed the stack on the table close to the door. "Also, Van is outside the door. Elisabeth got injured last night while on guard duty, so she is in the medic center right now recovering."

The story about Elisabeth probably may have been true, given how the maid warned of the castle still be susceptible to hostile intruders. Or it might have been a ploy to gain Kathia's trust. For now, the girl decided to play along and said, "Okay, I'll be there shortly." Then after the maid left, the girl got out of the bed and to take the clothes. She changed in them behind the folding screen. After getting dressed, the girl left the room and greeted the boy guard, "Hi Van!" She made her way to the stairs and went down it. She stood at the base of the stairs, looking at the purple blade of the dagger. She wondered what material it was made out of, since it didn't look like it was painted. Her eyes widened in surprise for a bit when she saw Van passing her by. Kathia watched where he went and saw that he turned into a room on the right hand side, one door away from the room that she met the good Spinx at. Van was leaning against the wall as he watched over her. From the backside of his armor, it looked like it took damage last night and was no longer look new, but rather battle torn. That must have been more proof that the Bad Spinx was out to get her. But then again, the boy could have done this himself. Feeling hungry, Kathia made her way over to the kitchen to get some breakfast. She grabbed a plate and filled it with sunny-side up eggs, sausages, a slice of roasted ham and a biscuit. She cut the biscuit up in half and put butter on it. Then she filled her glass with milk and returned to the table to eat and drink.

At the village, a mother dragon returned back to her cave room with some meat she ripped from prey during her hunt and some fruits. She dropped them next to her sleeping hatchlings and the Firestar sisters. She nudged each hatchling awake and said, "Wake up, younglings. Breakfast is here." The hatchlings opened their eyes and looked to the food before them.

Kylie beamed excitedly, "Yay, breakfast!"

Danielle was also hungry as well as she said, "Alright!" The hatchlings got out of the nest and started eating the food.

The pink hatchling named Pinky looked at her mother gratefully and said, "Thanks, mama!"

The autumn dragoness smiled back and replied, "You're welcome, dear."

With the chicken cooked, Minerva took them out of the oven and placed them on cooler pans. Then she took one outside through the backdoor, since holding both would be difficult. After giving it to the sleeping dragon, she said, "Here you go, Drake. I have another chicken back inside the kitchen. I'll come back with the other one." Then she went back inside the kitchen and took the other chicken out. She went back to Drake and placed it in front of him. "Here you go, enjoy!" she said, smiling.

Drake woke up with a rather loud yawn. When he saw the food the woman brought him, he grinned and bowed his head to her. "Thank you, Minerva," he said before he used his tongue to flick up the cooked bird into the air and catch it with his mouth, once each.

"You're welcome," replied Minerva, who was glad that the dragon appreciated the meal she cooked. After he ate the chicken, the woman went to go look for Ronan. She found him doing a handstand outside on the front yard. Walking over to him, she said, "Ronan, breakfast is ready. Don't let it get cold now." She smiled humorously.

The man got back onto his feet. "I'm coming," he smiled. He followed the woman back inside the house went over to the kitchen. "What's on the menu today?" he asked curiously.

Minerva smiled and playfully said, "See for yourself; I can't spoil the surprise." Then they entered the kitchen and she showed him the meal she made. "It's porridge, Ronan," she answered. "With bananas and honey."

Ronan smile chuckling, "Bananas and honey? It'll taste better than what I used to have back with my old master. He had me eat it plain, which I got used to after a month." He sat down and took a smell and gave a satisfying 'mmmmm'.

The woman smiled back and said, "Sounds like he didn't want to put all that sugar in your body." She picked up one of the bowls and took it over to the dining table to eat. She ate one spoonful and savored its sweet taste. She had done well in making this breakfast. She hoped that Ronan like it as well.

The man took a taste and gave a satisfying sigh. "That tastes so much better than plain." He continued to eat. "So, what's on the agenda today?" he asked, looking to Minerva, asking her between bites.

After eating another spoonful, the woman answered, "Well we got a call to expect back from David. He'll probably finish the blueprint today or tomorrow. And I got to check the news to see what I should write about today." Somebody else wrote about the dragons' war on mankind in the NE region of Rudvich. But now after watching the news yesterday, she would have to write one about the dragons' global assault. But she wasn't sure if she should do this as it might give racists fuel to continue their hatred against dragons. But at the same time, it might show people why they shouldn't have done all the terrible things to dragons and that people may learn a lesson from this. Minerva would probably have to talk to Ronan about it first, which would be right now. "Ronan, do you know about the war between dragons and humans?" she asked.

Ronan was a little surprised by her question. "Do I? I've witnessed it everywhere. Were it not for my upbringing and my master, I would probably be among them. That's why Drake and I work well together. Why do you ask?" he asked curiously.

She told him her reason and expressed worry about the outcome. "I'm not really sure if it would be the right thing to do. That's why I'm asking you for your opinion on this, because this is very important. I don't want to make a mistake that would make things worse. Should I write the article or not?" she consulted. The fate of Windfall's human-dragon relationship depended on her choice.

The man paused as if he was thinking it over for a moment. Then he told her, "Write the truth. If you do not, someone else will and the spark of war will begin anyway, simply at a later time. The truth will spark conflict of opinions. Some will see it as a call to war; others will see it as the result of their mistakes. If war does come, the dragons, who I know to be much wiser than any human, will see the division between the humans. They will either side with the humans who would help them, or kill us all."

Minerva could see that he had a point. Even if the humans were conflicted over this, the dragons would spare the reformed humans and eventually become friends with them. Some of the ignorant people will open their eyes to this bond and come to understand the dragons. "You're right, Ronan," she said. "Maybe I should do this." Then after breakfast was over, she put her bowl and glass in the sink and went upstairs to her room to go onto her laptop. She opened up the ADR's website and checked the news to see if anybody has beaten her to it. They did; a morning article has just been posted about the global war. Relieved that she didn't have to do any work, the woman thought, *'Well it looks like a part of my agenda just got fulfilled.'* Then suddenly, she heard the telephone ringing both in her room and from downstairs in the living room. Minerva spun around in her chair and got up to approach the phone. The

caller ID on it read "Whitney Palance" with her phone number. Perhaps that was David calling to let her know that the blueprint was done. The woman picked up the phone and asked, "Hello?"

Just like she thought, David was on the other end. He answered, "Hey Minerva, I'm just calling to let you know that the blueprint is ready. So did you have a good morning?"

"I sure did," said the smiling woman. "Ronan and I had porridge for breakfast and he liked it."

"That's great!" beamed the man. "Well anyway, the blueprint will be at my house for you to pick up. Just bring the money with you, okay?"

Minerva nodded and replied, "Alright, I got it. We'll be there today as soon as possible. Good morning to Whitney for me, okay?"

"Got it and I'll see you later," said David. Then he hung up the phone, which Minerva did afterwards.

The woman went downstairs to tell Ronan the news. She found him sharpening his assortment of weapons on the dining table. One by one, he cleaned them and sharpened the bladed weapons. "Excuse me, Ronan," she said. After he turned to her, she continued, "David called and he said that the blueprint was ready to be picked up."

The man smiled and said, "Excellent... excellent news. One step closer. We can leave as soon as I'm finished sharpening, ok? Weapons like these require a lot of care and attention every day, luckily only ONCE per day though." He went back to sharpening.

"Okay, I'll wait," said Minerva. "I'll be watching TV in the meantime." Then she went to the living room and sat on the couch. She picked up the remote and turned the TV on. The morning news talked about the city government's new plan to ban all electronic technology save for the ones necessary for human survival such as refrigerators, x-rays, stoves, etc. The reason for this was to conserve the energy that dragons put into keeping the city running. Constantly using magic for hours tended to have great exhaustion on the body and make the mind delirious. Even with the help of the human mages, the task was too much and hiring more mages would be costly. Minerva understood the concern for the workers, but she also predicted that there would be many people angry with this decision to ban the things they were heavily used to. She tried to find the good in this by looking at the bright side. At least people would have to spend more time outdoors getting some sunlight and exercise. And people would be reading books more often, instead of getting their eyes blinded by electronics. These reasons would be good enough, right?

Bam searched the desert for prey and edible plants to eat; for a while, nothing came into sight so far. The sun's hot rays were warming his scales to the point where he would feel the heat. "Boy, it sure is hot

out here. It makes me wish I asked the gray dragons earlier to bring in some clouds," he mused to himself. Three minutes later, he found some prickly pears on a bunch of cacti. Delighted at his finding, the navy blue beamed, "Oh joy!" Since he knew his cousin couldn't eat plant-based food, he telepathically contacted Yopple, *'Hey Yopple, do you eat fruits? I found some prickly pears.'*

The cassare's response sounded a bit happy at first before quickly calming down, *'I love fru-AGH! I mean, I eat them if there is nothing else.'*

The navy blue replied with a smile, *'Great! Then come on over to me; I'll be happy to share these pears with you.'* He lowered his head to the reddish-purple fruits on the cactus and felt the needles poke his chin. *'Ouch!'* he thought, feeling the sting from the cactus.

'I'm heading over,' Yopple responded. Bam closed his mouth around the pears without sinking his teeth on them and pulled the fruits off. He dropped them on the ground and went to get the other pears. After a few minutes, Yopple arrived as he trudged towards the area the navy dragon was in. Spotting the fruits on the ground, he said, "Nice... find."

Bam smiled and replied, "Thanks! These are like one of my favorite fruits. They're good!" He picked off a pear and ate it. Savoring its sweet and juicy taste, he hummed, "Mmm!" Then he picked up another pear and ate it. Seeing the cassare eating, he asked, "So do you like the taste, too?"

Yopple shrugged and responded through a mouth full of fruit, "It's okay. I'm more of a meat person myself, but this is okay."

The navy blue replied, "Well as long as you're okay with it. Eat as much as you want." He took two more pears and ate them.

After Kathia was full and her plate was clean, the girl got out of the chair and pushed it back towards the table. Then she went to check to see if Van was near the door to hallway; he was. So Kathia went to look for the infirmary to ask Elizabeth on what attacked last night or see if she could find the Good Spinx and hopefully spy on him without anybody watching her. Well Van would probably watch her anyway and she had no idea on how to distract him, so the latter option was impossible. For now, she would just have to go with finding Elizabeth. The girl went everywhere until she found the infirmary. She took a peek past the open doorway to see if the woman was alone or if any nurses were around. But then she withdrew her head when Van got in front of her. The boy seemed to be blocking her from opening up the door behind him. The look in his eyes kind of told the story of what was behind that door, Elisabeth.

The girl bit back her teeth in annoyance and thought, *'Persistent little brat, aren't you?'* She really wanted to lose that unwanted attention, but how? Then an idea suddenly sprang into her mind; she noted how she and Van were different genders. The only way to split up was to go to a place where

males and females can't see each other, the bathroom. She hoped such a place would have a window for her to escape through and hopefully find the Good Spinx or better yet, a way out of this world. The girl formed a pretend smile on her face and asked, "Hey Van, do you know where I can find the bathroom? Nature's calling to me right now." The boy's face turned a bit hot from the question and he just pointed down the hall, holding three fingers up. He looked to the ground out of both embarrassment and worry. "Thank you," the girl said. Then she walked over in that direction down the hall until she reached the bathroom.

Kathia opened the door and went inside. There it was; the window like she hoped there would be. But unfortunately, it wasn't the kind she hoped it would be. It was unlike the modern windows that let one open and close them at any time. This one didn't seem that it would open, no matter how hard she tried. "Oh phooey!" Kathia cursed in displeasure. Now she would have to find another way out of here. She knew of the balcony from the guestroom, but that was too high for to jump down from without hurting herself. The girl let out a hopeless sigh and said to herself, "Great, now what?" With no way to escape Van, she might as well go to the library and find something to read. Hopefully, there would be a spell book or something about fighting techniques for her to learn. But first, she waited for three minutes, so that she didn't appear suspicious by leaving the bathroom too early. After that time period, she turned the sink on and let the water flow for a bit. A few seconds later, the girl went back to the young bodyguard and asked, "So where is the library?" Van looked at her and nodded his head as he pointed to the door across the hall.

Kathia mouthed a "thanks" to him and went off in that direction. She quickly saw light glowing out the door like there was some kind of special electric light in there. But this was a medieval-like place; surely, they wouldn't have electric lights, right? Then within the next second, a lightning bolt zapped out the doorway. The girl briefly stopped, thinking something was going on in the library. Then she heard sounds coming out of that room. It sounds like someone was going through some books, probably magic books. The lightning from a few seconds ago seemed to be proof of that. If someone was in there practicing spells, then this would confirm Kathia's hopes of there being spell books in the library. The girl went next to the door and stood beside the frame, being careful not to become an accidental victim of the magic. She poked her head to the side to make sure the coast was clear before she went in. To her wonder, the library was massive with tall bookshelves and arrays of many books. "Wow," she murmured in amazement.

The library looked empty at first until someone walked by her with a mountain of books heading down a lane. The person said, "I really hope these books are the ones he's looking for. He has yet to see." He almost looked like a servant, but unless servants were now packing firepower and armed with large two-handed swords, more likely not one.

Another person came by with three books floating around him, reading them all at the same time. "Interesting, very interesting. A barrier of that strength could keep out a demon sure enough, but for how long?" he said out loud as he continued to walk down another alley.

Van came up to Kathia with a book, a cherry red book. It had an image of a dragon on it as the title read, *History of Dragons and Dragon Magic Volume 1:1*. He simply held it out to her. The girl took it and said, "Gee, thanks!" At the same time, someone shot a fireball down the lane. Kathia jumped in surprise, thinking that she could have gotten burned. But thankfully, she didn't. The fireball hit one of the shelves not even burning the books or scoring the wood. The girl went to a table and sat down to open the book and read it. To her disappointment, the book was written in a strange language that she didn't understand. "What?" she murmured in disbelief. She turned the pages quickly to see if the rest of the book was like that. Fortunately, she found the common language section that was of the same design as the first half of the book, but with a language that she was most familiar with. So the girl began to read the book that started with the history of dragons to see if there were any valuable info on how to defeat these fiends.

Throughout the rest of the hour, Minerva had seen more reports on the news. There was one where dragons were outraged over a diner discriminating against them. The same diner was then forced by the Aquarians to allow service to the dragons. The woman thought that would be something to write about on the ADR's website. She would have gotten off the couch and go to her room now to do it, had she not heard Ronan's footsteps coming down the stair. Then she felt a tap on her shoulder, which she looked over and saw the man behind her. He was dressed in his usual outfit. "Ready to go?" she asked. She knew the answer was going to be 'yes', but she needed to make sure her assumption was right.

Ronan grinned and answered, "Yes. Let's head out." They went outside and climbed up on Drake's back. Drake flew them over to Whitney's house so that they could see the finished blueprints.

Then they landed at the front yard. The humans dismounted the dragon and went to the front door, where Minerva pushed the doorbell. A few seconds later, the door swung open and to the one who answered the call, David. The man flashed them a smile and said, "Hey there! I got your blueprint right here." He held up the rolled-up blueprint in his hand to them.

"That's great!" said Minerva, glad to see that it was done.

Then David opened the blueprint up and said, "Now let me show you all what I've added since last time. Just follow me to the table." Then they went inside the house and the man placed the blueprint flat on the table. He took his finger and pointed out the new details. "Alright, so I've drawn out where the pipelines will be for the restrooms and the probable drinking fountain, if you guys need one. And we also have the air filters and power lines for the AC."

Ronan nodded as he followed along with the details. "How big is the training area here?" He asked, pointing to it on the blueprint. "It needs to be big enough to fit a large group of people plus the various equipment I'll need to use for teaching and training."

David looked slightly embarrassed as he answered softly, "Er... It's one thousand square feet. Did you wanted a really big training room?"

Minerva answered, "Yes, we did. Sorry we forgot to tell you." She herself was also embarrassed as she and Ronan forgot to tell him the details.

The ginger-haired man forgave her and said, "Hey, it's alright. I can fix that up for you guys quickly and then take it over to the office supply store to have it printed. That is, if they haven't shut down their printers by now." Minerva assumed that he was referring to the morning news about the technological ban. Then he asked, "So anything else I should know before I start redrawing?"

Ronan nodded and said, "The training area will need to have half of the floor padded. The other half will have to be hard." Then he looked to Minerva and asked, "We did mention a locker area last time, correct?"

The woman shook her head and answered, "I don't think we did."

The assassin looked back to David and said, "I think that's all. Once the school's up and running and we start making money we can expand as necessary or make adjustments."

The draftsman replied, "Okay, I'll get to work on it right now. Sit on the couch and wait or hang out with my sister, if you want." Then he went to his room to get started on reworking the blueprint.

Just then, Whitney came out of the kitchen and was happy to have the familiar guests here again. "Hey! Good morning! How are you guys?" she smiled and beamed.

Ronan smiled at the redhead and greeted, "Hello Whitney, a pleasure to see you again." He bowed his head to her, while Minerva just greeted her with a smile and a "hello". "Your brother is a skilled architect with these blueprints," the man said in admiration.

"I know, right?" said the ginger woman. "That's why he made A's in his classes. He really knows his stuff."

The impressed swordsman complimented, "That sounds incredible! I'm glad Minerva here made the right choice in picking our draftsman." He looked at the blonde in praise, who grinned and felt flattered.