

Chapter 41: Juna Captured

For a while since the trio had split up, Aeolus had been moving through the desert to hunt for live prey. The scorching heat was a bit exhausting, but he could still bare it. He finally found his prey when he saw some flamingos fishing for food in the river. The dragon started to charge up his lightning breath for the kill. But before he was even halfway there, he heard some bad news from a horde member telling him in an urgent tone, *'Aeolus, we have an emergency! Juna has been kidnapped by a human intruder.'*

The leader's breath died down and disappeared as he was feeling dismayed. *'What?! How did this happen? There were plenty of you there to stop him,'* he asked telepathically.

The spring dragon replied, *'He was pretty fast, Aeolus. Faster than a second. Naia tried to get Juna away from him, but he disappeared in a blink of an eye and then attacked her. Then he teleported away with Juna and took her over to Dracul.'*

The horde leader was now concerned; not just for the one who can train the horde, but also about the enemy having a really fast human who could teleport. It was hard to imagine that such a human existed. He could imagine that if the rest of human race was like this, then that would be trouble for dragonkind. Whatever method the human used to pull it off, Aeolus needed to find a way to deal with people like him or the horde will be unable to complete their conquest. *'That's unsettling. Very well, Bam, Yopple and I will return from our hunt and see what we can do to rescue her,'* he said. If Mekarth had no relation to Juna, Aeolus would have let her stay captured and just get the training from Mekarth. But because he knew the black dragon would care about his sister, Aeolus decided the best course of action was to rescue her and gain their trust. He used telepathy to contact the other hunters, *'Bam, Yopple, we must return to camp immediately. Juna has just been kidnapped by one of Dracul's humans.'*

After a while of eating the prickly pears, Yopple faced the navy blue dragon and suggested, "Maybe we should find as many of these as we can and bring them back to the horde. If this is all we can find..."

Bam saw efficiency in the plan and said, "Hey, good idea! We should do just." Then he thought about bringing a companion along. And since the cassare was here, the navy blue asked, "Want to team up and look for them together?" Before an answer was heard, Aeolus's telepathic emergency was heard. Bam's face contorted to astonishment as he asked, *'Huh?! Really?'* Yopple let out a sigh and shook his head at the news.

'Yes, really,' the horde leader said to his cousin. *'This is another chance for us to gain her trust, so she can feel at ease training us. We need to talk to our witnesses so that we can discuss the perfect way to bring her back without hassle.'*

Bam replied, *'Okay. We'll be back at the village!'* Then the dragon looked at Yopple and said, "Come Yopple, let's warp back to the village."

The cassare replied, "Alright then. Warp to the village." Yopple gathered up some of the cacti fruits and concentrated on his magic. Soon, the teleportation process began. A few moments later, the dragons landed in the village.

The navy blue saw the horde coming out of the caves and talking to the other dragons to learn what happened and said how they would have prevented Juna's kidnapping. Aeolus arrived shortly by teleportation from the magic stone. The magi couple approached their leader and Kekul asked, "Aeolus, Enamora and I have placed a tracking spell on Juna. We're ready to rescue her on your order."

Aeolus replied, "Alright, but not yet, Kekul. We need to learn more about the kidnapper first. Where is Mekarth?"

Enamora answered about what she had heard, "Apparently, he ran outside the village. He was pretty stressed about having his sister taken from him."

"Has anybody gone after him?" asked the horde leader, wanting to make sure that they haven't lost the black dragon.

The purebred magi replied, "Yes, Nowe tried to chase him down. He must be trying to get through to Mekarth."

Aeolus said, "Good, let's hope he gets him to calm down soon. Because I need to speak with him. For now, I will speak to the witnesses hear and find out more about this man. Do you know of anyone who saw him?"

Kekul opened his mouth to speak, but he held his tongue as Salvo and Pyro approached the horde leader. The cassare clan leader interjected, "I do. Pyro here was the one who tried to stop him, but that Mekarth held him back before he could do anymore." His ice blue eyes glared as he growled, "This wouldn't have happened if he gave us a chance to fight." Then his face softened into calmness as he continued, "But I suppose there's no use crying over spilled milk now. We still have these magis here to go after Juna and the hairless ape."

The leader told him, "That is true, but his faster than light speed and teleportation troubles me. I need to find out how he's doing this and plan out a way to cut off whatever source he's got." It was too risky to attempt the rescue without the man coming back to retrieve Juna or slay the horde in a blink of an eye. He looked to the cassare dragonet and asked, "Pyro, tell us everything you know about this human."

Pyro began, "Well when I tried to burn the human with a fireball, he came out unscathed. He even spoke

about how he was much more powerful than I am."

Aeolus found this piece of information concerning. He imagined the human must have been using something to protect himself in the form of really good fireproof clothing or a spell. As for how powerful the man was, the leader already knew of his two attributes, but there had to be more to the man than what he heard. The leader pressed on the issued, "Did he wear any form of armor to protect himself?"

The dragonet shook his head and answered, "No sir, he just wore a cloak. That's all."

"Did he use any spells?"

"Not at all," answered Pyro. "Well unless you count taking out your sword and then going faster than an eye's blink as one."

After processing all this information, Aeolus came to the conclusion that the cloak functioned as the man's armor and the sword was his source of teleportation. If these two things were to be removed, then the man would be practically defenseless. But then there was still the issue of Dracul's other soldiers to defeat, if they were ever nearby Juna and the man. If any of them could teleport, they would certainly put tracking spells to bring the entire army to the horde. Because the horde wasn't numerous in number yet to fight against them, defeat would be inevitable. That was something the leader couldn't risk. So for now, he would have to train his horde in learning to disarm humans of their weaponry and armor. He would do so using his human form as a practice opponent. Aeolus thanked the dragonet, "Thank you, Pyro. Your observation has proven useful for me to figure out what to do."

Pyro asked, "So what's your plan? How do we bring her back?"

The leader answered, "For now, we don't do anything. Unless we have an invisibility spell to hide one of our pygmies and use him as a spy." That way, the spy will keep an eye on Juna to make sure she's safe and see what other tricks the human had. Better yet, the spy could go out to see Dracul and learn of his next plots.

Enamora spoke up, "Or I could transform him into a fly. But it'll only last for 15 minutes."

Aeolus thought about how brilliant the dragoness's idea was. With invisibility, the scent would still be smelled by dragons and they would track it down to the spy's location. But as an insect, the spy would be harder to track as he would hide in tight places like holes in a wall for example. The leader said, "That sounds like a good alternative, Enamora. But we'll need a stone infused with your magic, so that the spy will be able to come back for you to recharge it. Fabre could make one for us."

Salvo made a disgruntled face and growled, "So you're just going to leave a dragoness all by herself with these monsters instead of rescuing her immediately. Some leader you are."

The leader turned his head abruptly at the cassare clan leader. He was displeased with Salvo's lack of respect, but he decided to ignore it for now. He told, "I understand you may be worried about her, Salvo. But I will not risk having this horde destroyed early.

The clan leader spat, "Worried? Pah! I could care less about that human lover or what happens to her. I'm just concerned that her brother will refuse to train us if don't bring her back now."

"I feel the same way you do," said Aeolus. "Which is why I'm going to talk with him and see if we can work out a plan. He knows more about Shadow Wind and Dracul's minions than I do." With more knowledge from Mekarth, Aeolus may either decided to keep the plan as is or change it to make it better. For now, he would wait until the former dragon lord returns.

After 15 minutes later, Merkath and Nowe the leaf pygmy returned to the village. During that time, the nocturnal dragons had returned to Doubloon's village to sleep after bringing in a clan of earth-based dragons. The magi mates and the cassare clan members had also left Aeolus and went to talk with the other dragons. Nowe flew off to tell the others that he's back, while the black dragon looked at the horde leader and asked, "So Aeolus, what plan do you have?"

The horde leader told him of his plan and the consequences of simply going for Juna immediately. After that, he started to ask, "Speaking of which. Mekarth, I have a few theories about this human that I need confirmed. Are the cloak and sword his source of protection of teleportation?"

"I do not know. I can't tell what is magic and what is not," said the black before his head kind of lowered. "I've never been able to at all." Mekarth sounded a little depressed by that before he turned his attention back to Aeolus, "However, I do know that man is a time leaper, or to put it in regular terms, a mage capable of slowing or speeding up time, even stopping it for a few seconds. That is really all I know. Axle and Juna are the ones who know more on magic topic than I do, sorry." Aeolus felt somewhat discouraged by the black's lack of knowledge on the magic. Even more unbelievable was how a black dragon such as himself was unable to use magic, and that breed was capable of such a thing. However, the leader was getting somewhere after learning how the human was able to go this fast. He would be sure to ask one of the other former lords later about this. Mekarth started to turn around before he stopped and looked at Aeolus, "Mind me asking but do you know where they might have gone to or a certain area?"

Aeolus answered, "You mean Axle and Atlas? I do not know. But if you need to know, I shall ask them." The disaster dragon spoke telepathically to the magi dragoness, '*Atlas, how far have you and Axle reached Trident Mountain?*'

The response he heard in his mind was, '*I don't know, but we're not even close. We only got till afternoon to get there. But get this, Aeolus. Dracul apparently wants get there within 24 or else he'll put Axle's daughter in danger.*'

'What?' asked the horde leader. He sensed something suspicious about the tyrant's demand. It was as if Dracul was using the hostage to lure the two dragons into a trap.

'I know, right?' said Atlas. 'I think that bastard must be planning a trap for us there.'

Aeolus warned, *'Your guess is as good as mine, Atlas. You and Axle must be careful. Whatever plans Dracul has for the two of you, it certainly won't be pretty.'*

The magi spoke determinedly as if eager for battle, *'Well whatever he's got waiting for us over there, I'll be sure to foil that plan and give him the middle claw. I won't let that bastard or that vampire he sent us get us.'*

'He sent you a vampire?'

Atlas answered, *'Yes, he did. But it's not a dragon, it's a human that somehow got turned into one. Axle decided that girl is innocent and brought her with us. But I wouldn't be so sure. She might take off that collar while we aren't looking and let her family in on where we are.'*

Aeolus didn't like the idea of having an enemy this close to duo for unnecessary reasons. He found Axle's decision to be a foolish one that would surely bring danger to them. But hopefully, as least they'll be able to use her to spill out any beans as to what Dracul is up to and gain some intelligence on him. For their safety, he told her, *'Then by all means, keep a sharp eye on her on all times. That way, she won't cause any trouble when you least expect it. And whatever reason you have that collar on her for, make sure she keeps it on until you have no further use for her. After that, kill her.'*

'Tch! Easier said than done when Axle's got compassion for the whole world, even the bad guys. He's just not the type to kill a fly.'

Aeolus frowned in displeasure with the white dragon's pacifism and said, *'That fool; one day his soft-hearted nature will be his doom.'*

'That's what I'm worried about,' said the concerned dragoness. 'But it looks like he's not his usual self lately. Not after the killing of his human daughter and the kidnapping of the other one. I think he means to get his claws on Dracul and kill him. Hell, he even killed a dragon to avenge the dead one.'

Aeolus's opinion of Axle lightened a little as he said, *'So he's not as soft as he seems. That's a good thing.'* One must use force, no matter how violent, when confronting a malicious leader in war. It was the only way to free a nation.

'Yes, I guess,' Atlas agreed.

When they no longer had any words to continue the topic, the horde leader found it to be a perfect time

to tell the magi what happened on his end. *'Anyway, I got some bad news that should concern Axle. Juna has just been abducted by one of Dracul's men.'*

The magi was surprised in a terrible way as she yelled, *'What the fuck, how?! She was with the horde, wasn't she? There's no way that could have happened.'*

'But it did and I doubt any one of us could have stopped him.' Aeolus told her how the man was a time leaper and what he was capable of. He continued, *'That's why I brought this up, so that maybe you, a magi dragon, and Axle will tell me about one would use the power to stop time.'*

Unfortunately, Atlas was clueless on the subject as well. She said, *'Well gee, I don't know how it works. I've never cast any time spells in my life and I don't know if I can.'*

With his friend out of the picture, Aeolus had the dragon lord siblings left. *'Then I guess I'll speak to Axle or Juna about this in a few minutes. Thank you for this talk, Atlas. I'll contact you again when I need something.'*

'You're welcome, Aeolus. Good luck with getting Juna back.' Then they ended their telepathy. Aeolus looked to Mekarth and told him everything he learned the conversation like how far away Axle and Atlas were, who their new travelling companion was, and why they needed to hurry to Trident Mountain.

The black dragon gasped a bit in response. "Well, that is not good. Not good at all," Mekarth said as he took a step back. "Tell Atlas to keep a distance from Axle. If Dracul did that or had someone did that, that is not going to be a pretty sight," he said as he shook his head. "Axle may be a person who rather have life or death, but he will kill anyone who attacks or threatens his family or people he cares for, that include people who gets in his way. Take it from me," he said. Mekarth took a few seconds before he redirected his attention back to the problem at hand. "Well now we have to get Juna back ASAP, so that she can train you guys, because I simply cannot," he said before he took his leave from the village, back towards the empty desert, and back towards the copy of the city the newly-recruited earth dragons were making.

Taking the black's warning seriously, Aeolus used telepathy again to contact Atlas and warn her before it was too late. *'Atlas, it's me again. You haven't told Axle about Juna yet, have you?'* he asked.

The magi answered, *'No I haven't, why?'*

The disaster told her, *'Good, because Mekarth has just given me word of caution about his brother. I've heard that he gets violent whenever anybody tries to harm the people he loves. He's even hostile around those who get in his way. Atlas, you need to keep a safe distance away from Axle now, and don't tell him anything about Juna either.'* Keeping the dragoness's capture a secret would prevent her brother from getting more angrier than he was now.

'Um, right. The secret's safe with me,' said Atlas. Aeolus could sense a feeling of disturbance in her tone as if she was more worried than ever for the white dragon.

The telepathy ended once more and the horde leader went on to contact Juna next. Axle was out of the question; talking to him about the time leaper could end up leading to him finding out about his sister. The disaster pictured the silver dragoness in mind and asked, *'Juna, are you alright?'*

Her bitter response was, *'Well at least the collar does not stop telepathic communication. And to answer your question, no, I'm not alright. You better start explaining why I'm in a damn cell again.'*

Aeolus found it odd how the dragoness knew nothing of her own abduction. Surely, she wouldn't ignore the fact that her life being in danger. *'You mean you don't know?'* he asked.

'How about the fact I was asleep,' Juna snapped back at him. The horde leader scowled in response to the dragoness's harsh tone. He knew she had a strong dislike for him, but the way she said it was enough to get on practically anyone's nerves. She continued, *'Aeolus, when I get out of here; you, me, and my brother are going to have a very nice long chat about this. Oh, and will only take an hour or so.'* The way she said it, almost sounded too calm for it to be good.

Aeolus suspected that that this "nice chat" was going to be opposite. Perhaps she may rant at him about today's incident or how she went unconscious yesterday, but who knows what she had in mind. Anyway, the leader questioned, *'And how do you intend to escape? You just got kidnapped by a time leaper. You break out and he might come for you again before you least suspect it.'* He had originally thought about sneering the question, but that would make her dislike him more. He needed to get on her good side, so that his horde would receive training.

'Simple, knock down the front door.'

Juna sounded confident in her tactic, but what about making her way out from her prison? The leader asked, *'And the guards. Do you believe that you are a match for any of them, even a group of them?'*

'I don't know, Aeolus. Who knows? They might be worth fighting at full strength,' the dragoness replied back. *'If you want to help, go ahead.'*

With Juna's permission to aid her, the horde leader replied, *'Very well, I shall send a few spies over to your location and have them scout the place for the safest way out.'* Aeolus searched his surroundings for a pygmy who would be useful for the mission. He found Nowe eating one of the prickly pears that Bam and Yopple returned with. Beside him was a honeycomb pygmy who had just finished his breakfast. The leader called out to him, "Liath, I need your help."

The pygmy gathered his bees and flew over to land in front of his leader. Liath asked, "What is it, sir?"

Aeolus said, "I will tell you once I get a few others to go for the spying mission." Then he found 5 other pygmies and summoned them to hear the mission. He briefed them, "So as some of you heard, Juna has been captured by the enemy and we need her back. But this will not be a rescue mission; instead, you are to act as scouts to help her search for a good way out of the enemy's territory. And secondly, I'll need you to spy on Dracul and his soldiers and tell me of their plans, so that we can be prepared to foil them." One of the pygmies raised his claw, wanting to speak his mind about this. The leader gave him his attention and asked, "Yes?"

The pygmy spoke, "Aeolus, I know you've been a pretty good leader so far and all your plans have worked so far, but wouldn't it be more convenient to just teleport Juna back to us?" The other pygmies agreed with his suggestion and voiced how easier it was to just do that.

The disaster thought that they would question his plan, knowing that they may not understand it at first. He was prepared to answer their concerns. Remembering what he thought about his own plans, he explained to them the consequences of going through the pygmy's plan. At the end, he said, "And that's why I decided for you to do scout and spy instead. When Juna escapes out of the building, the enemy will know she's ran out on her own. Then after she's far out of their sight, that's when we teleport her back to us. They'll most likely still think that she's running away and still keep their chase. But even after this, you still must spy on them, no matter what." Then his eyes narrowed slightly in seriousness for what he was about to say next. He cautioned them, "But be warned, this mission will be dangerous. Should Dracul and his cohorts catch you, it'll spell the end of your life. If you are seen, get your magic crystals and teleport away; not to us, but to a place far from us so that they don't suspect you of being with the horde and bring their whole army against us." Compared to the horde's usual human hunts, being alone in the enemy stronghold was incredibly risky. For one, the enemy will surely outnumber the spies and the pygmies' small stature may not land them an easy victory in a battle. It would be like a mouse running through a den of cats. The pygmies better pray that their training yesterday would be enough to combat anyone bigger than themselves.

The pygmies stood nervously, understanding what this mission would be like for them and thinking whether they should be in on it or not. The wasp pygmy on the other hand was also curious about the particular item that was needed for the mission. "Magic crystals?" he asked.

Aeolus explained, "Yes, magic crystals. Fabre will be making crystals and infusing them with Enamora's magic. These crystals will allow you to use any spell a magi dragon can do, but only until their power runs out. You must conserve your energy and use them only at important times. Otherwise, you won't be able to come back here or do anything else. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" said all the pygmies.

"Good, I hope you all remember that," Aeolus told them. "Because a single mistake can make things go wrong." The pygmies took his warning seriously to the heart as they made a mental not lose the crystal or use it too much. "Anyway, Enamora has proposed a spell that will make your mission easier."

Interested in the magical convenience, Liath curiously asked, "What is it?"

The leader answered, "A transformation spell, but not the one that turns you human. Instead, you will be flies. In this form, you'll be harder to see and harder to hit. This spell will be perfect for the spying mission." And perfect to spy on human camps in the future as well. He was grateful to the purebred magi for having to suggest that spell.

The pygmies were content with the spell as they felt that they would be safer using it. After Nowe finished his breakfast, the leaf pygmy, who overheard the conversation, approached the horde leader and asked, "Well that's nice and all, Aeolus. But how do you plan on stopping the human or anyone else for that matter from coming back here to capture Juna again? I mean I don't know if the man's been here in this village before. But if he hasn't, then he must have gotten here somehow."

Aeolus knew the pygmy was right; he had almost forgotten to talk about that until he was reminded. The leader replied, "Oh yes, we should look for that first. Nowe, you are a witness, are you not?"

The leaf pygmy answered, "Yes I am, why?"

Aeolus told him, "I need you to show these pygmies here through telepathy what that human looks like. One of them needs to find that man and see how he does it."

"I got it," Nowe responded. Then he turned to the spies and stared at them for a few seconds. *'This is what he looks like,'* he said. He gave them a mental image of the spy in full details such as his face, hair, the gray cloak he wore and a two-handed sword he carried with him.

While the spies were in the process of memorizing the kidnapper, the horde leader telepathically called the two dragons he needed, *'Enamora, Fabre, we're about to send the spies off soon. I need your help to make magic crystals for them.'*

The magi dragoness replied, *'They're going off now? Well then, I'll be right there.'*

The crystal-maker said, *'We're coming.'* Once the spies fully memorized the man, they told Nowe that they got it now. Aeolus looked at his surroundings, expecting to see the approaching magi and the crystal-maker. There they were past the other dragons; Enamora was coming in from behind and Fabre was approaching from the front. Once they made it to the group, Fabre started to create crystals by summoning magic energy and channeling it to a spot on the ground where a brief small flash appeared and was soon replaced by a teal crystal. Enamora picked up the crystal and infused it with her magic.

After 6 magic crystals were created, each one was given to each spy to keep. The magi dragoness instructed the spies on how to use the crystals, "Now to turn yourselves into flies, you must imagine yourselves as these bugs and willfully changed your body shape into that form while using the crystal's

magic energy. You must also shrink yourselves into the right size." The horde leader found Enamora's explanation to be very similar to that of the human transformation spell. It seemed like transformation spells can be used to turn anyone into many different species they wanted to be. Looks like the transformation spell was more convenient than he thought. After the magi was finished teaching the pygmies how to use other spells, she told them, "And if you ever have any questions, don't be afraid to ask me, okay?"

"Okay," the spies replied.

With the briefing over, Aeolus figured that it was time to send the spies off to the prison, now that there was nothing else to tell them or give them. He looked to the magi and told her, "Enamora, warp the spies over to the prison now."

She obliged, "Yes, Aeolus." Then she used the tracking spell to give her the image of Juna's whereabouts. Taking the prison scene into her mind, she looked down at the pygmies and teleported them over to the prison. The spies disappeared from view to begin the mission that their leader assigned them.

The magi and crystal maker looked at their leader as he said, "I really hope the mission goes well. This is essential to us for our advantage."

Fabre assured, "I'm sure they'll do just fine. After all, you and Enamora told them what to do their jobs."

Aeolus replied, "You're probably right." Then a few seconds later, 6 bright flashes appeared between them and in their place were the spies they had sent earlier. The leader wondered what was the meaning of this very early return they had taken. He questioned them on it, "You pygmies, what's going on? Why have you come back?"

Liath told him the bad news, "Well we were supposed to be in prison with Juna, but we weren't there and neither was Juna."

The crimson flare next to him said, "We just got warped to the ocean instead."

"What?!" Aeolus said, taken by surprise and confusion over teleportation doing the opposition of where it was supposed to take them.

Enamora found it extremely hard to believe as she said, "But that's impossible. My tracking spell's supposed to help take you over to her."

Liath shrugged, "Well apparently it didn't. I don't know what happened or what caused it, but that's just how it is."

Aeolus shook his head in frustration; looks like they were going to have to come up with a different plan.

But first, he would have to ask the magi. "Enamora, do you know any spell that would deflect your teleportation or tracking spell?" he inquired.

The magi shook her head and replied, "Not that I know of. But there are illusion spells that would make your surroundings look like a totally different place."

The horde leader theorized, "Then perhaps the spies might have been deceived. Enamora, can you go to that ocean and dispel the illusion?"

"Of course I can," replied the magi. She teleported herself over to where the tracking spell took the spies and arrived at the ocean. Then she anti-illusion spell to get remove all traces of any illusions around her. But nothing changed; the ocean was still itself. This was no illusion; it was the real deal. "Oh no," Enamora said to herself, realizing that her tracking spell really did get deflected. She warped herself back to the horde and told the leader, "Aeolus, the ocean wasn't an illusion. It looks like we really did get rebounded."

Aeolus's mouth curled into a gritting frown. "Curses," he growled. Dracul's forces have managed to defeat him with whatever unknown spells they had. "I guess we'll just have to delay the rescue until we come up with something. For now, we'll just have battle training until a plan comes to mind," he said. So, the horde leader gathered his horde for a meeting and organized sparring partners. The only dragons left out were the earth dragons who had to continue building the Shadow Wind duplicate and the spies who needed to practice turning themselves into flies until they were perfect at it. After every partner was assigned, the horde went out into the desert. Aeolus went face to face with his crimson flare partner. He blew his lightning breath at him, which the pygmy dodged by rolling sideways through the air.