

Chapter 52: A New Dragon in Town

Atlas and Akil ended up in a very low light dim cave. The smell of water and moss-covered rocks filled the air as Akil took a step and splashed some water. "Welcome to the cave of lost voices. Rumor has it, the spirits of these caves still linger among them. I hope you're not afraid of ghosts and try to keep up," the green dragoness sneered at the magi before she took off in a full sprint.

Atlas snorted about the idea of being afraid of ghosts and said, "Spirits? Hah! They're dead, they can't hurt me." She ran after her daughter, trying to keep up with her. Water splashed with each step she took, sending droplets onto the upper part of her legs and her tail.

They entered a large open cavern in the cave as light was shining through a very deep crack from the surface. They stopped and Akil turned to the magi, saying, "Okay, so you're not a complete wuss, but you're not bright either. Even the undead can hurt you in more ways than one."

"What?" said Atlas as she gave Akil an addled expression. Ghosts exist in the living world? That can't be right; they say the souls always pass into the afterlife once their bodies die. What would cause them to linger here if the rumors were true about this cave?

The green dragoness turned and looked at the gash. She said, "There's our exit; it's going to be a tight squeeze climbing up that small gash, so recommendation, do not panic or you're going to get yourself stuck, and I won't come and get you either."

The magi understood, replying, "Got it." Akil quickly jumped into the narrow gap and started to climb up it. Her wings were spread out and she was moving slowly and breathing very calmly. Atlas followed after her as she climbed up the rocky surface. Each foot grabbed and held onto the handle parts of the gash. She was nearly halfway there, when she felt the foothold one of her hind legs rested on break off. The magi was taken by surprise as she felt herself slip, but she managed to hold on quickly, preventing her fall. But unfortunately, the minor slip-up had caused her to get stuck, which Akil had been warning about. "Ah shit," Atlas cursed quietly to herself. Well since her daughter refused to help out, the magi was just going to have to teleport over to her once she reached the exit.

But that idea was shot down when Akil reminded her, '*Do not use magic.*' She yelled down at her mother, "So you do remember what Juna did say right before we left? NO MAGIC. You're going to have to figure out how to get out of that pinch without magic."

Atlas gritted her teeth in frustration. Now what? She was stuck here with no way out to pull herself. Not even transforming into her human form would do as this spell was magic. The only thing she can do was make physical attempts to pull herself out. Atlas tried to get her fallen foot onto something to start. With no foothold found, she just let her foot sit on the wall of the gash. After getting her other foot onto the next foothold, she tried to push herself up, but it was pretty hard to do. The armor she was wearing

seemed to have made it difficult for her to squeeze through. Maybe she could try to get down and then start over from the bottom to hopefully to try not to get stuck this time. But when she tried to climb down, she found that she still wouldn't budge.

Looks like she was going to have to turn to help. She could ask Akil, not to get her out, but to ask for advice on what to do if she were in her mother's situation. But the magi was too prideful to ask her. She didn't want to look pathetic to the dragoness who seemingly hated her. The green dragoness already thought badly of her for the 'lies' she thought they were. So another dragon that Atlas can turn to for help was Aeolus. She talked to him through telepathy, *'Hey Aeolus, I need your help here.'*

The disaster dragon asked, *'What? Already? What happened, Atlas?'*

The magi answered, *'I got myself stuck in a hole that I need to climb up. You know I can't use magic to save myself and Akil doesn't want to help me out here. So I was wondering if you knew would know what to do if you were in my situation.'*

Aeolus said, *'Hmm...'* There was a pause from the disaster as if he was thinking of a solution for her.

Atlas didn't want to afford to waste time. Her daughter was probably going to leave her pretty soon and try to get this mission done by herself. She pressured her friend to hurry up, *'Aeolus!'*

He responded to her, *'You might find it easier to slide out if you had some form of liquid to slide yourself out. But you probably don't have some with you, unless of course you want to use some body fluids.'*

The magi frowned at the suggestion, finding it gross and asked, *'Are you telling me I have to spit on myself?'*

'Yes, if that's the only way,' Aeolus said. *'Sometimes situations call for unusual measures. You need to think of creative ways to get out of them, even if it's nasty.'*

'I guess that's true,' Atlas reluctantly admitted. She was still uncomfortable with the idea of spitting on herself, but it was necessary to free herself. *'Thanks, Aeolus. I'll see if I can give this a try.'*

'You're welcome and good luck.' Then their telepathy was over. Atlas looked down at herself and spat at the stomach. Then she spat around at other parts of her body that was stuck until her mouth went dry. She waited until her mouth regained moisture to continue. The saliva sank through the edge touching both armor and rock, slightly softening the wall with its liquid.

Pretty soon, another set of saliva formed in her mouth. The magi spat at both of her sides this time to make it easier to slide through. *'I am going to smell like spit,'* she thought with displeasure. Since she couldn't reach her backside, Atlas made another attempt to slide herself up. Unfortunately, it was still just as tedious as her first time. So she tried to pull herself up even harder. This time there was a little bit

of progress, she felt herself slightly get higher on the wall. Aeolus's idea had worked. The magi climbed up with the same exert of strength that managed to help her. It quickly became easier to climb as she got out of the part where she got stuck. She reached the top of the gap and pulled herself up. To Akil, she asked, "Okay, I got myself out. Where to next?"

Just then a mysterious female voice rang, "My, my. What a lovely pair of dragonesses. A hybrid dragon and a magi dragon, so exquisite."

Atlas asked, "Who said that?" She sniffed the air for a scent, other than her daughter's and a stench that was filling the air.

Akil simply stood there and respond. "And what honor do we own you, Luna Sage?" she said back in a calm tone without looking back at the on comer. The scent came from behind the magi. Before Atlas could take a look back, Akil whispered, "Atlas, it's best if you do not turn around."

"What? Why?" questioned the magi.

The stranger called Luna said in her calm tone that sounded like a seductive being, "Oh nothing much, just was wondering who was leaving my cave. Also, Juna ranged in and called in her favor I have to repay. No idea why she would tell me to bring you a protection guard when you already have one on your neck. As for your friend there, general, she's a bit too big to wear it that it might just choke her to death. Well maybe, maybe not, who knows." Atlas frowned, this day was making her feel a bit bad for being big with her daughter wanting a smaller dragon for a partner, the tight gap in the cave back down and now the collar. Luna continued, "But I've done what I was asked to do, so I'll be taking my leave now. Tootles you two, and have fun."

Akil stood there for a second before she and her mother looked behind them and saw no one. The general murmured, "Bitch."

Atlas asked about the female who just randomly showed up, "Who the heck was that?"

Akil looked at her mother out of the corner of her eye and answered, "Her name is Luna Sage. She's a, um how do I say, shady figure to put it. Evidently, these caves belong to her and Juna knew it seems. Honestly, I did not know where I was going, just following what was leading me to the opening. Also, that collar was not designed for a dragon, but it's a choker for a human as they called it, which means, seeing how I cannot change into a human, that leaves you." The end part sounded like a bit of a confused statement.

"Me?" asked Atlas as she looked at her daughter like she was nuts. "That's a tall order. I can't use magic, remember? I turn human and then the lords are just going to send their baddies right after us." Then within the next second, she remembered what Juna said about a certain location that the city's mages couldn't look into. "Oh wait, the safe place where it's safe to use magic and we're right here at that

place. Perfect timing!" She saw a ruined city in the distance. Noticing how degraded it was in both appearance and atmosphere, Atlas assumed that this was Shadow Wind. It looks as if it got wrecked by the Spell, that is if anybody there rebelled during that time.

The magi looked down at the black leather choker with red symbols, each of them having a small shine in them, across it and small gems dangling from the bottom. She shrunk down to her human form and picked up the protection guard. She looked around it for the opening to unbuckle and found it on the other side. Atlas saw the tiny silver buckle and examined it to see what she needed to do to open it, since it was different from the slave collar and armor buckles. There was an appendage sticking out from a shallow hole on the loop buckle. When she tried to push it in, the buckle started to open. Now that she figured how to open and close the buckle, the woman took the end of the choker out of the buckle and then placed the guard around her neck to wear it. She closed the two ends back together and now she was able to cast magic without getting into any trouble. Atlas didn't turn the choker around and left the buckle at the front of her neck, not caring how she would look.

Akil spoke up, "So now you're in your human form, um exactly how long can you maintain that form for? Because you will snap that little thing when you change back."

Atlas answered, "I don't know, I've only been in human form for a short time before I change myself back. What? Are these transformations timed or something?" She was not sure if it was as she has never seen Axle automatically turn back into a dragon before without his control. But if it was, then that would be bad for she would be unable to use magic again after some time without bringing the attention of Shadow Wind's mages.

The daughter looks at her mother for a brief second before shaking her head. "The spell itself does not have a time limit; your body does. Axle has told me that when he first used that spell, it put a huge strain on his body after a few hours of using the spell. Still," she said as she looked up to the sky.

'A few hours?' thought the woman as she wondered if the amount of time she will remain human would be the same as Axle's.

After a few seconds, Akil turned back and looked at Atlas. "Come on let's move, being out in the open is not smart of us."

Atlas agreed, "Right, and we also got to do this mission fast, too. I don't want that collar choking me when I'm forced out of this form." Then she ran across the land, trying to get to the city as fast as she can. The sooner they find Luco, the sooner she can leave in human form.

With all the adults busy doing something, the Firestar sisters were left with nothing on their talons. They wondered what they could be doing in the meantime until they saw some of the Group 5 members and

overhead their conversation about hunting. This gave the sisters an idea. They saw Ohimia walking and ran over to her as Danielle called, "Hey Ohimia!"

The lumina stopped and looked to see Danielle and Kylie bounding to the front of her. The sisters looked up at her eagerly with light in their eyes. Ohimia smiled down at them and said, "Danielle, Kylie, what's up?"

Danielle said her, "We wan to go hunting with you!"

Kylie asked, "Can we come?"

But Ohimia turned them down softly, "I'm sorry, little ones. Hunting is a job for grown-ups only. I'm afraid I can't take you with me."

"Why not?" asked Danielle as both sisters looked disappointed to be turned down.

Ohimia answered, "Because there's wild animals out that will eat you. You should find somewhere to stay safe at until we get back."

Kylie asked, "But where?"

Then they heard someone suggest, "You can stay in the village with me. I'll watch over you." They looked to the pink-crowned green dragoness, who was with Aeolus earlier, approaching them.

Danielle asked the green dragoness, "Who are you?"

The spring answered, "I'm Jarilo, little ones. And you are?" The sisters said their names in response. Jarilo smiled down at them and said, "Well Danielle and Kylie, we can play a little game together until the others get back. Is that alright?"

The sisters smiled with excitement at the idea. The balloon pumped her hands into the air and cheered, "Yay!"

The whiptail bounced and said, "Yes, we wike to pway!"

Jarilo giggled gladly at their enthusiasm and said, "Alright then, let's go to the village, so that we can play Tag. Follow me."

Then the hatchlings followed the spring to the village as Danielle beamed, "I wike Tag! I'm very good at it!" The reason for this was because her quick speed lets her catch others and get away from them easily.

Kylie, on the other hand, was not so eager to play this game as she could never beat her sister at this game. "I hate Tag..." she grumbled.

Several minutes had gone by since dinner was finished. The scraps on the plates were put into the garbage, which was now full. Minerva took the garbage bag out of the trash bin and tied it up to close it. Then she took the bag with her through the door and headed for the trash can, where she disposed the bag. Then she sees an electric dragon poking his nose at everything he sees. The blonde woman observes how he was going about his business and thought, *'He looks like he's curious about this place. I guess he hasn't been to a human city before that looks like this.'* As he got near her property, Minerva greeted him in a friendly manner with a smile, "Hello there? Are you new here?"

The dragon turns to her and replies, "Umm yea, I'm from another town. Today I feel like traveling, so ya."

"Another town?" the woman asked curiously. Perhaps he must be a former slave or pet. She bet he must be enjoying his newfound freedom. "Well welcome to Windfall, it's nice to see you here. The dragons and humans here are equal under law. I think you might like this place."

"If that's the case, nice," he said, smiling.

"Yes, nice," said Minerva nodding her head. Then she thought about the human populace in this city and their attitude towards dragons. She thought to give this dragon a fair warning before he would find his feelings hurt. She told him, "Though while we do share the same rights, there are some humans here who are rather quite racist. They're upset about the global rampage that took the lives of many within their own kind as well as the medieval changes to this city. So they're pretty much unforgiving towards as a result."

The dragon replied, "Oh, actually I was free my whole life. And if they ever come close, I have my shopkeepers as backup."

Minerva looked at him curiously as she asked, "Shopkeepers?" He sounded like he was an owner of a store. But how can that be and where? Perhaps he lived in one of the rare dragon civilizations that have been dwindling in number throughout the years of slavery. But did dragons even run stores? That sounded quite unusual as she had never heard of such a thing. Maybe she was ignorant about the existence of such. "Did you come from a dragon town?" she asked. It had to be that, since slavery and hunting was rampant everywhere before the past few days. That's the only kind of place where he could be a shopkeeper, unless maybe he was talking about a human settlement that had some degree of dragon rights.

The dragon answered, "Well, no. I came from a human town. They treat us just like we are humans."

"Oh, that's pretty wonderful!" said the woman. She was amazed to hear that another dragon-friendly town like Windfall existed. The humans there may be more friendly than the ones here. "So where is this place?" she asked. She thought about visiting this place one day when she gets the chance.

The dragon replied, "Well, it's pretty far away. It is near some mountains, a forest and a lake. It's pretty nice there."

"How nice," said Minerva. She was actually trying to get the name of the town, but ended up asking the wrong question. So now she was going to ask the right question she wanted to know. She asked, "So what is the name of the town?"

The dragon looked unsure as he said, "Erm... I actually don't know the name of my town. My shop is actually not in the town. And I regret not talking with the mayor."

"Oh okay." It was quite puzzling how the dragon could live in the town for so long and not know the name of it. And to have a shop outside the town? How did he do business? Minerva guessed that maybe it was one of those roadside businesses. "I guess I'll have to look it up on the map then." With the internet banned in Windfall, she will have to turn to books to search for the name of the dragon's town.

The dragon said, "Oh and if you're wondering, my shop is right at the entrance of the town. Also, what do I do now?"

Minerva suggested, "Well I guess we can do a bit of a tour around Windfall, if you want. I could even show you the place I work at, the school my boyfriend and I are getting set up, and even the city hall if we get far to those places." A tour would be a great way to get the electric dragon to know a bit about Windfall. He could get to see a few interesting sights before they could find him a place to stay.

"Uh sure!" he said excitedly. He looks in thought for a bit before saying, "Okay, so let's not waste our time. You can give directions on my back." He laid down on his belly as he waited for the woman to ride him.

She smiled at his enthusiasm for the tour. He was ready to go, but there were a couple of people she wanted to bring along for the adventure. "Wait one moment, I'm going to see if my boyfriend and his friend want to come with us," Minerva told him. Then she went back inside the house and went to Ronan's room first. She knocked on the door to let him know that she was here. After the man opened the door, she invited, "Ronan, I found a traveling dragon outside. I offered to show him around the city. Do you want to come with us?"

Ronan smirked and said, "Alright, let me get my things together. I'll get Drake from the backyard and meet you out front."

Minerva replied, "Okay, I'll see you guys there." Then she went back downstairs and headed out the door. She rejoined the electric and told him, "My friends will be here shortly." She stayed with him as she waited for Ronan and Drake to meet up with them. Soon, both man and the walking dragon he was riding on were here. The blonde decided to introduce them to each other first before they would go on the tour. She started with her friends first, "Ronan, Drake, this dragon here is a shopkeeper from another town that's dragon-friendly like Windfall."

The electric dragon blinked really excitedly and asked, "Hello you two. May you introduce yourself?"

Minerva introduced her friends to him for them, "This guy here is Ronan and the dragon is Drake."

Ronan nodded to the electric, "A pleasure to meet you."

"Greetings," Drake bowed his head. Then he asked, "May we know your name as well?"

The electric answered, "I'm Bolz!"

"Shall we go?" Ronan asked, waiting as Drake examined the new dragon.

"Yes, I'm so ready!" Bolz said excitedly. Electricity also starts forming in between his horns.

Minerva says, "Alright, let's go!" The electric then lays down again to let the woman ride him again.

As she gets onto his back, Bolz asked Drake curiously, "Oh and if you don't mind, can I ask what is your breed?" Minerva looked at the brown dragon expecting his reply. She made a guess on what breed her friend was; perhaps he was a copper dragon. But then again, maybe not.

The brown dragon grinned, "I am a desert dragon. Where others find the sands and hot winds unbearable, I find myself at home. I see your body generates electricity. Been a long time since I've seen one of your breed." So Drake was actually a desert dragon. Minerva had forgotten about that breed until now. He led the way and asked, "Are you skilled in the arts of magic, Bolz?"

The electric answered, "Erm, not really... But I have another ability that no one else have; the ability to get all information from something just by sniffing. But of course, that is like cheating in relationships." He added, "Oh and also, I'm an electric dragon." He flapped his wings repeatedly and asked, "So where will we go?"

The woman pointed towards a direction and suggested, "Let's go that way. There's a park nearby from my house. Have you seen it yet?"

"No, but the park sounds interesting," Bolz said while flying toward the direction she pointed out. As they flew, Minerva could see children playing at the playground with their parents around. A girl was on

the swing as her father pushed her forward. A boy was going down the slide and his mother was at the end waiting to catch him. A male toddler was standing inside a play system, looking around for something to do. After the dragons landed on the ground, Bolz lays down again so Minerva could get off. He asked, "Hey, could I examine everything here?"

After she climbs off, the woman answers, "Of course you may." Glancing to the family, she cautioned, "Just be careful around some humans. Like I said, not everyone here likes dragons."

"Okay!" the electric replies and paddles to the slide and sniffs it. Then he paddles over to sniff at the boy. The boy screamed in fright and ran to his mother. "Hey it's okay, I'm not gonna hurt you!" Bolz said, trying to ensure the child.

The mother grabbed her son and held him behind her protectively with fear for his life. She yelled, "Get away from my child, you monster!" Minerva sighed unhappily; she had a feeling that they would react like that. The girl stopped swinging and her father stopped pushing as he held onto the chains holding the seat. They both watched Bolz like he was carrying some sort of disease they didn't want to catch.

The electric said unhappily, "Great... Well everyone here does hate dragons like you said, Minerva." He continues to sniff everything at the playground.

Ronan glared at the family as they left with the children. "Don't feel bad, Bolz; not everyone in this town has hatred. Used to be gang that terrorized those who live in this city and support the idea of living with dragons. That gang is no longer a problem," he said with a smirk.

Drake eye rolled before explaining, "Minerva works with an organization that 'sympathizes' with our kind. The conflict is more vocal than it is physical."

Minerva said to Bolz, "As Ronan said, the anti-dragon gang is no more." Then she looked to the assassin, whom she needed to educate on Windfall's history, and continued, "But Ronan, this prejudice goes much deeper than the gang. You know the worldwide rebellion that the dragons started, right?" Then she went on to explain to everyone, mainly Bolz since he was the newest one here, "Well six days ago, one of these many incidents occurred here in Windfall. The original name for this city was Cypress and it didn't look like the Windfall it is today. In fact, the city looked more modern and technological. So when the rebellion started, a lot of humans were killed by the dragons and their property damaged. Then the next day after that, the mages and dragons of this city along with the Aquarians rebuilt this place into the medieval city known as Windfall. The mayor of this city wanted both races to live in harmony, but after everything the humans suffered and the changes made here like the ban some forms of technology, a lot of people refused to tolerate the dragons. They've just lost their loved ones to the rebellion and some of the technology that made their lives comfortable. So acceptance isn't going to come that easily."

Bolz replied, "Understood. Good that I still keep technology in my shop, since all the magis that I know

worked together to block the Spell. And they also blocked my town from the Spell somehow..."

Minerva looked at him in confusion and thought, '*Spell? What spell?*' She knew nothing of what sort of spell the dragon must have been talking about.

"So, where will we go next?" the electric asked. He then lays down to let her climb on his back again.

The woman tried to think of some other interesting places they can go to. "Uh...I guess we can go to the place I work at, the ADR's headquarters," she suggested before climbing onto Bolz's back. She hadn't been there since the mafia attack. She wondered if the survivors were feeling fine now and if the HQ had been rebuilt quickly like how the city was during its reconstruction.

"Okay! Let's go," Bolz said. He then tilts his head and electricity forms between his horns again. To any ignorant person, it would seem like an attack or something, but this was just a normal unprovoked thing for electric dragons. "Be careful if your hands are right there!" he said as he takes off with Drake following him after Ronan gets on.

Minerva already knew the dangers of getting shocked, but she went along with his warning and replied, "Okay." As the dragon flew, she pointed out the directions to go to get to the ADR headquarters.

After practicing a few spells, Kathia cast her breeze spell just outside her tent. The wind magically blew gently through the air, making the girl's hand feel a bit cool. Then she cancelled it out with her no-wind spell, putting an end to the breeze. A boy poked his head outside his tent and saw her. He was surprised to see the redhead here as he announced, "Hey, Kathia's back!" Upon hearing this, people got out of their tents to look and found the missing girl alive and well in one piece.

One man said, "It's true, she is here."

Kathia smiled at them and came out of her tent as she said confidently, "That's right! I'm back and perfectly fine."

Then someone pointed at the unconscious halfling woman and asked, "Hey, who's that?"

Kathia answered, "That is my prisoner. I need her around to help a man I have inside with me."

A woman curiously asked, "A man?" Everybody wondered about the stranger their magic teacher had inside her tent.

Kathia confirmed, "Yes a man. He tried to fight the necromancer who kidnapped me, but ended up

getting himself hurt."

The woman, who received the quartz her husband was turned into, asked, "Was it the same necromancer who killed my husband?"

The redhead confirmed, "Yes."

Another man asked, "So what did he do to you after you were kidnapped?"

Kathia answered, "He tried trapping me in another dimension, but luckily I found a way to escape without him noticing." She omitted the part where she was helped out by the people from the temporal plane as she wanted to be seen as capable and independent in the refugees' eyes. As a future warlord against the dragons, she needed to look good, so that she can inspire others to be strong and fight for her cause.

Everyone became impressed and the same man asked, "That's amazing, Kathia! How did you do that?"

"Uh..." the girl started, unsure as to how she can explain this without looking like a liar. Fortunately, she thought of an idea on what to say. She answered with another lie, "I found a ritual spell that would send me out of the dimension and put me back in this world. Then I summoned ghosts to lead me back here."

The people gave her strange looks as the woman asked, "Ghosts? You summoned ghosts?"

A man asked, "That sounds like necromancy. Are you a necromancer, too?"

Kathia answered, "Not yet, but I will be and so will you all if you want to learn. I only know spells to see spirits and summon them. I'm still trying to learn necromancy."

Marcus's wife looked intrigued with idea as she asked, "In that case, please teach me how to bring the soul of my husband. I'd love to see him again."

The mage looked into the woman's eyes, seeing the want and hope to see her deceased beloved. The girl understood that feeling well when she wanted to see her parents again by bringing their spirits back into this world. "Very well, I'll do it," Kathia replied, accepting the wife's request. But before she could do any teaching, she asked the others, "Say, is Jason teaching class right now?"

A bearded man answered, "Nah, he and his search party are still out in the woods looking for you."

Kathia said, "Well in that case, let's start our new lesson right now." She got the people to tell the others that she was back and is now starting her magic class. Even Roderick was informed of this and he sent two people to tell the search party the good news. Kathia went to the training grounds where she waited for her students to meet her at.