

((Note: This section takes place during [chapter 1](#) of the main story.))

Albel zipped through the burning city. People and dragons alike were being slain by each other while others fled. He smirked at the chaos. "Curious, when did that go off?... I heard they made a spell but..." He looked around; so much blood. If it weren't for the smoke blocking his smell, he probably would've turned wild by now. He felt frisks anyway now and again as he moved through the city. People seemed to be running from the coliseum. Deciding it was worth checking out, the black-maned black hybrid ran to the gates and inside. The only things he was greeted with were fleeing people and a kid fighting a bleeding moon dragon. Or at least his mouth was running. He didn't seem to have the guts to kill it. He considered running in and attacking it himself, but paused when the dragon yielded. "Pathetic," he muttered, watching from afar.

The boy went closer to the dragon and used his healing magic to mend its wounds. Then the force field around the arena disappeared as the dragon reared up on his hind legs and looked as if he was about to take flight into the sky. After the healing was done, Albel watched the dragon fly off through the hole in the roof. Then he watched the boy move to the door and then decided to stay inside. He wondered if the human was injured. Why shouldn't the hybrid be able to have fun while the other dragons are rampaging? Albel took a running start towards the teenager. He reached him quickly, drawing his katana and went to stab the boy. "Hey kid," he greeted with a smirk, staring down at him. The boy caught sight of the incoming attack and dodged. Albel hummed a brief amused sound as the human rolled out of the way and let the sword hit the wall. He thought, *'Just like a little monkey, aren't you...'*

Turning his head to face his assailant, the boy let out an audible groan. "I don't suppose you're here to offer me tea and crumpets, are you?" he rasped tiredly, feeling a fresh spike of adrenalin.

Albel pulled his sword from the wall easily and turned on the boy. "Quite the opposite, kid. See all the dragons out there are having fun. I figured I'm entitled to some too. I don't care for dragons; they've always hated my kind. But your kind... you were the ones responsible for making this mess in the first place." He held his katana to the boy's throat, making him scared. His thoughts briefly dwelled on the lab and all of its scientists. He smirked and asked, "Tell me boy, are you bleeding?" He was looking for an excuse to go on a bloody rampage.

The boy relaxed and replied, "Am I bleeding? No." He took a sizable leap back and lifted up his arms to release a flow of energy. He seemed to have quite a bit of energy despite how tired he acted. Tiles underneath cracked and broke as a slab of earth rose up between Albel and the human. The boy warned, "But you might be if you don't stay out of my personal bubble."

The hybrid narrowed his eyes. His smirk faded. Was that a threat? Albel was one to intimidate others, not the other way around. He growled and breathed magma over his sword before slashing the earth wall in two with the now searing hot blade. He pushed the rest of the rubble down easily and unsheathed his claws, with the attempt to grab at the kid's throat. Albel paused as the boy turned to the

right and ducked at the last moment. But at least his claws had gotten the cheek, leaving an angry red gash across the boy's face. Slipping right under the hybrid's outstretched arm, the boy placed one hand on the hybrid's elbow to lock the joint. He seemed to be trying to block the hybrid's arm from bending back. He saw Nick's elbow go towards his side and smirked. He let the blow connect to his tough hide, which no doubt would have felt like elbowing stone. He snorted and said, "Fool, you humans are too weak to harm me on your own. You have to create petty guns to protect yourselves." Then he asked with smugness in his voice, "But they don't work anymore, do they?" Albel turned and swung his arm back with his shoulder joint. His other hand came around to grab the boy and pinned him to the ground. He smirked in satisfaction and taunted, "Yield, worm!"

But the suddenly, the boy turned into water and slid away with ease. He had almost reform to make a blow with his ice-turned arms before collapsing from exhaustion. Through clenched teeth he forced out the words, "You talk about weak, yet you attack me immediately after I get through fighting another. Go ahead finish me, and maybe you can go hunt some crippled fawns after this."

Albel's ears twitched at the boy's snide comments. He planted his foot on the human's back, pressing him into the ground. He spat, "That's your fault for being a weak whelp. I killed an entire lab of humans, after killing an entire dungeon of dragons and my mother. So tell me, what's your petty excuse for being dead *exhausted* after one little dragon? Pathetic!" He removed his foot and sheathed his katana. "I'll give you your petty life. I've no interest in trouncing... weaklings..." his words faltered. What was that smell? Blood. Very faint. His eyes caught the blood smear on the stone floor. He had lost interest in killing the boy, but that blood lust. That familiar feeling. It felt great and it tugged at him. He spaced out at the floor, his breathing having hints of snarls in it.

The boy coughed as he turned his head away and spat, "Creating takes more energy than destroying, not like you would know though." Albel continued to start blankly at the floor, his face had dusted. He didn't seem to hear the teen's comment or at least didn't act like it. His red eyes started to glow in the low light. His mouth hung slightly agape; his breathing almost obnoxious with its growls. His eyes locked on the boy and his tongue ran briefly over his teeth. The boy healed himself suddenly as the water around him washed away the blood and began to drain away into the damaged floor below him. Albel had his claws slightly raised, staring still hungrily at the boy. His hazing vision started to clear along with his growls and the glow of his eyes. He opened his mouth more to catch his breath. He'd been so close. Straight up murder would have been the last of the boy's concerns had he fully flipped to his hunter mode. It was humorous really, the boy hadn't even realized the serious danger he was almost in. Albel loved a good kill now and again, but he loved toying with people mentally more. In his hunter mode he would just kill them, but in the slowest and most agonizing way to his pleasure.

The hybrid watched the boy feebly pick himself up. He glared at him all the way. '*Humans are so fragile. Weak,*' he thought as the boy was unable to support himself and had to use the wall for help. Albel hated weakness. He looked at the teen as a little chihuahua. It was then, mildly amusing that like the small dog he viewed him as, the boy had quite an attitude. He seemed to enjoy dragons to a point; having released the bleeding moo dragon earlier. He thought, '*Another bleeding heart for dragons.*' It

was ironic really. Some humans had always been compassionate to dragon, yet when the dragons broke loose from their cages, they killed indiscriminately; blinded from rage.

He came out of his thought as the boy asked, "Why don't you do me a favor and grab me my staff from the security office?" The human gestured towards the little office next to the front doors.

Someone was going very retro on the mage thing. Albel made a snort of laughter. He prodded, "Still pathetic as ever. Can't even walk on a regular basis without a cane then?" The hybrid would rather bludgeon the kid half to death with the staff. Maybe he'll just dangle it out of his reach. He found himself going to find the staff. Albel retrieved it and went back to the boy, holding the staff almost threateningly over the boy's head, daring him to make a comment about fetching. It was almost fun to toy with people again. He hadn't been around others in so long.

The boy didn't bother to jump for it as he could hardly stand as it was. He said, "I was walking just fine before you attacked me. The crystal on top serves as a focusing point for my magic, and there is also a blade hidden within the staff, but it'll also work just fine as walking stick very much." His gaze went back up the staff and he asked, "So are you going to give me my staff, or would it be more amusing to watch me crawl through the city, or no better yet I'll just roll through the city like a child down a hill? The dragons will be so bewildered that they will forget to attack me."

Albel smirked at the boy; perhaps his attitude was just a glimpse of Dion. It would explain why he hadn't snapped his neck. Then again, the hybrid was sure he killed Dion. That always bugged him, because he had never actually checked. That was mostly due to going on a blood rampage. "I've had plenty of things attack me and I walked away after. You're too soft, worm," he growled the last part, letting the staff clunk onto the boy's head, making let out an audible 'ouch'. He had to admit it would be very amusing to watch the human crawl through the city and get snatched up by a dragon in his feeble state, but then his entertainment would be gone.

The boy kept his weight on the wall as he slid down it and picked up his staff, before standing up and putting his weight against the staff. He stood in thought for a moment before asking, "So what happens now? Do I just walk, er... limp away, or are you going to follow me and terrorize me some more? Maybe call out with a bullhorn 'Hey look a helpless human' for anyone to hear."

Albel stared at him thoughtfully; that was a good question. He wasn't going to sit in the coliseum all day, that was for sure. He wasn't going to baby this boy either. The hybrid moved forward and opened the doors, ignoring the boy's nod of thanks. He folded his arms across his chest, smirking and said, "Do what you want, whelp. I don't care. Don't expect my help. If you get injured, crawling will be the least of your concerns." Albel knew the boy wouldn't understand this as he didn't seem to know anything about hybrids, but it was fun to mess with his head.

The boy nodded once again and head towards the door, one step at a time with his weight on the staff. As he pushed the door open, he left he looked at the hybrid one last time. He said, "Well, I guess that's

that..."

Albel stepped outside and looked around. He noted he should probably look for his brother. They hadn't been together in a while after Fayt settled in the city. But given the city was burning now, he considered finding Rika as well. Or at least seeing if she'd gotten eaten yet. Their friendship had split a long while ago as well. Albel didn't hold friends for very long it seemed. He noted pessimistically, *'Not like it matters if I find them in this mess. If they aren't dead, they will be if I find them.'* This was of course because he'd have to cross the bloody streets to find them and would not doubt enter his hunter's mode not far into the street. Probably the first few feet he went outside the coliseum. It was humorous really. He looked over his shoulder at the boy with an unnerving stare, a slight smirk. He didn't doubt in the boy's weirdness he would try and 'roll away' from him as he tore his claws through him.

The hybrid opened his mouth slightly, considering warning him about his blood quirk. He quickly decided against it, looking ahead again. It wasn't like he wouldn't instantly sniff him out once he entered his hunter mode. His smirk was replaced with a frown. He was in essence trapped here. Since when did he care if his hunter's mode killed anyone? Perhaps pity of the boy's pathetic condition? No, not likely. Albel tended to enjoy the suffering of others. He glanced down at his scarf. Sure, it would help block the blood smell, but it would have to be damp first. There was definitely no water around with everything burning. He growled audibly in frustration.

The boy came to a stop and turned around, only about 30 feet away from the hybrid. "You know, if you're going to stalk me, maybe you should give me your name," he called out, his voice sounding course from all the smoke and flames around.

Albel's eyes flickered to the boy again. Come to think of it, he didn't know the human's name either. Again, why would he care? Despite his disgruntled mood, the hybrid managed to grunt, "Albel." He didn't ask for his name back, not wanted to sound interested in the boy's affairs. "I'm not stalking you. If I were stalking you, that would mean I wanted to kill you. I assure you you'd be dead by now. A long while ago. You are just a play thing," he corrected. Albel pulled his scarf up over his nose. He slowly started to move down the street, wondering how much the smoke would be able to stop his smell.

Blood hints seeped through now and again, agitating the hybrid. It wasn't enough to turn him, but he was noticeably ruffled by the brief whiffs he got. His claws twitched and he made staggered growls as he breathed. His pupils flickered between circles and slits. There was a certain anxiety to the hunter's mode as they lost control of themselves. Albel never thought much onto it since he enjoyed killing anyway, but it affected most hybrids like his brother, Fayt who was a much more gentler person. Hybrids like Fayt who never wanted to hurt anyone were forced into a rampage they could not control. There was a safety lock on their rage however. The scientists didn't want them turning on their masters. So each scientist was assigned a hybrid to bond to as a close friend. This was to test a hybrid's ability to follow orders under their hunter's mode. The hybrids would not harm those closest to them, however aggressive a mood they may be in. It was a control mechanism so the commanding officers wouldn't get slain by their own 'slaves'. Of course, this also meant the officers would have to give at least an illusion

of friendship and caring to the hybrids to make them obey and control their emotions. Happy soldiers made better soldiers in the long run. But in the lab, everything was still in testing phase, and the hybrids were treated like dogs and forced to kill each other and dragons to find the strongest genes to work with.

Albel settled for finding Rika. Fayt was probably off saving people, something the black hybrid had no interest in. His eyes locked on the manor in the distance. Rika's family, the Esteeds were a high class family off to the side for the sake of land. This meant they were away from the burning city, but still close enough to watch all of its events. He looked to his side when the boy suddenly appeared again. The boy hobbled after the hybrid as fast as his weakened state would allow and said, "Well, if I'm your play thing, then maybe I should stick with you. Wouldn't want you getting bored after all."

Albel growled in annoyance and warned, "Whatever, but don't think I'm going to protect you, maggot." The pair went off towards Rika's manor.

(**Note:** The following sections take place during [chapter 3](#).)

Fayt ran from the town's mechanic shop. "Wait in here, don't come outside," he told the other workers peeking out. They were human of course, as all the dragons were fleeing. He held a damp cloth to his nose to keep the smell of blood off. Bodies laid strewn across the road. Some humans were running out to the forest with dragons chasing after them. He sighed quietly. That was a problem. *'Maybe I should see if I can help... anyone,'* he thought, moving to the city's edge. People were running in every direction, he twisted and turned, not sure if anyone was in immediate danger. His ears twitched. Was that... crying? A child maybe? Fayt cautiously moved around to the source. A girl with flaming red hair, definitely not a child, though her wailing could have fooled him. He asked, "Miss? Are you alright? Are you hurt?" He moved a bit closer, though still kept a safe distance. Humans and dragons alike weren't always... kind to his type.

Fayt moved a bit closer as the girl looked up at him. When she saw the freak and became scared as she sobbed even louder. He was half afraid himself she was going to jump up at him with a gun. Of course, those were disabled now, right? "I'm not going to hurt you..." he paused as three men appeared.

One of them asked, "Hey, what's going on over there?" They all freaked when they saw the hybrid and cried, "Oh shoot, it's another dragon!"

The other man said, "Hang on, I'll chase it out of here." Taking out a knife, he walked up towards Fayt swinging his knife and yelled, "Scram, dragon! Get your butt out of here!"

Fayt still had the cloth to his nose in case any were bleeding. "Nnngh?" he groaned momentarily,

cocking an eyebrow at their initial reaction and tilting his head slightly in a misunderstanding head-shake. So they were afraid of him but the first thing they did was risk pissing him off by coming at him with a knife? He caught the man's wrist with his free hand, holding it firmly. He had the nerve to tell them off for being dense, but calmed himself. "I'm trying to help, thanks. I'm not a dragon... not exactly..." he trailed off, giving him a slight shove back as he released the man.

The man asked, confused, "What?! Not a dragon? Then what are you?"

Fayt stared at the man blankly for a moment. He didn't want to say hybrid. That always put people off. He settled for being 'cute'. "I'm a mechanic," he said simply. Fayt looked back to the girl and continued, "I came out of the shop and saw everything go crazy... I heard her crying and thought she might be hurt..." The white hybrid moved in front of the girl and crouched down in front of her and asked again, "So, are you alright?" He just hoped she didn't suddenly snap. He hated fighting, even though his brother was so keen on it.

The girl backed away scared and cried, "Get away from me!"

Fayt shook his head and picked up one of her hands, holding it firmly in his, yet not to hurt her. His other hand lightly pet the top of her head, "Hey, hey. Just calm down. You're alright," he said quietly, seeing she had no major injuries. "What happened?" He knew it was a dumb question given the situation, but he wanted to calm the girl down somehow.

The girl soon calmed down and began to tell her story with distraught, "Dragons... they killed my parents. They ate daddy and they kill my mom with a fireball. They were everywhere; they killed our guards and servants and burned down the neighborhood. It was horrible!"

Fayt listened to her story. It sounded about right given the situation. She seemed to be high class from the details. He looked around. The crowd was starting to thin as the main horde of people and dragons had already fled. He asked, "We should probably move then. Are you ok to walk, or do you need assistance?"

The girl sadly said, "I'm fine. I was lucky not to get hurt by those horrible beasts, but... I just wish the same thing for my parents." Fayt watched the girl get up and walk away without so much of a goodbye. He sighed; it seemed he wouldn't get to flock with humans after all.

The hybrid looked around the forest and thought gloomily, *'Well now what?'* The forest seemed empty as people and dragons had already fled the area. A few of both stayed behind to try and put out the town fires, but it all seemed eerily quiet.

A long walk later, Albel and the boy had reached the outskirts of the city where fresh grass laid free from

the burning and lead up to the manor. They followed the path and walked up to the door. Albel knocked, or rather, banged on it and waited for someone to answer. A servant opened the door, looking taken aback by Albel. "Oh! You... Uhh..." He looked at the burning city outside and pursed his lips. With a shake of his head, the servant waved the duo inside. "Well I suppose, come in then. Don't want to be standing out there," the servant said as he ushered them both inside and closed the door. "Make yourself at home," he added before wandering off. Dragons and human servants were cluttered in the main hall, chattering in alarmed manners about what was happening outside.

Albel and the boy walked past everyone and up the grand staircase, turning to the left at the split. They moved down the hall, walking noticeably quietly. They stopped at a door and the hybrid silently opened it. Inside was a girl with long silver hair stood by the window. She wore a white dress, making her look sweet and delicate. Albel greeted, "Oh, you're alive."

The girl flinched roughly, whirling on the spot. Her eyes instantly narrowed at Albel. "Hoping for otherwise, were you?" she asked with a frown.

A different servant came by and poked his head into the room, checking on Rika. "Everything alright, mistress?" he asked.

Rika smiled sweetly and nodded as she assured, "Yes, you don't need to worry." The servant bowed shortly and left the area. Rika's expression flipped sides on the dime. She now wore a scowl and had her hands on her hips. "What are you doing here?" she growled at Albel. She moved closer and asked, "And who's this clown? Your newest toy? Looks like you broke him already." She glared shortly at Nick and his condition, pointing at him as she talked. Rika turned on her heel, her dress swiveling behind her and said, "Bad hybrid to follow, little boy. He brings death wherever he goes and you seem to have the endurance of a toothpick from what I can see." She crouched by her bed and dug underneath it, pulling out her normal armored gear, sword, and bow. She stood back up and plopped them on the bed.

Albel smirked and said, "Kid got lucky is all." He grabbed the scruff of the boy's shirt and said, "He was bleeding out earlier, but he healed it in time." Then the hybrid released him with a light shove.

The boy brushed off his robe before he looked up at Rika and explained, "This 'clown' is Nick, and although Albel is overly aggressive, the mere act of traveling with him was enough to deter any potential dragons that would want to pick off an injured human. Sure, he wouldn't have helped me, but any potential attackers don't know that." As he talked, he walked over to the window and looked out.

Rika burst out laughing, "Oh ho ho, that's the funniest thing I've heard in a long time. Traveling with Albel while INJURED to be safe. I tell you now kid, whatever those dragons do to you, it won't be half as bad as what Albel did to you if he smelt your blood." At the end, she slowed her mocking laughter. "Speaking of which, shouldn't you be on a rampage by now with all this blood around?" she asked in a snippy tone.

Nick had to ask, "What do you mean by a rampage?"

The girl pulled away from her things for a moment to look at Nick, "He's not a dragon. He's a hybrid; a genetic experiment. Bred to be killers. They have the nose of a bloodhound and if they smell blood." She pauses to smile, "They'll go on a horribly violent rampage, killing everything they find and are unable to control themselves. Albel is sadistic enough as is. What do you think he's like on his rampages?" she asked mockingly. The hybrid simply smirked at the boy, his arms folding across his chest smugly.

Nick just rolled his eyes and let out a dry chuckle. "I'm so obviously bleeding now, am I? Traveling with Albel was the safest route to go. Anything that would have made me bleed would have killed me anyways, so it wouldn't have mattered if he went into a blood rampage now, would it?" He scoffed at Rika shaking his head a bit. "He's not a dragon, but he also isn't a human. Being near him is enough protection in itself. No dragon would attack me with him nearby. The art of deterrence my dear." All the while he talked, he kept his gaze out the window. He turned his head towards the girl as he finished and asked her, "Do you even think before you talk?"

Rika turned and pointed out his ignorance, "Do you? You just admitted to traveling with him while injured. He attracts dragons toward him. Humans and dragons both hate hybrids and try to kill them. Plus with all the blood in the streets, he could have gone off at any second. Not to mention if you had the tiniest scrape that would have done the job anyway. So in fact, your decision to stick near him while there was a bloody massacre in town was quite stupid."

Nick let a small smile creep onto his face and said, "Obviously none of the dragons in the city knew that they were supposed to hate hybrids, because we weren't attacked at all on the way here." He continued with chuckles this time, "You know, if I didn't know better, I would say you seem concerned about me. Why else would you try so hard to convince me that my actions were stupid and risky?"

"Tch," Rika snorted shortly. "No, I don't care. I just find your stupidity amusing," she corrected. "I was curious if stupid was curable, but apparently not," she added before going off into a side door.

He was about to turn his attention back to the window, but then Albel put an arm around the boy's shoulder, his claws digging into his arm just barely enough to not puncture. The hybrid leaned down slightly in a low tone with a simple, unnerving smile, "You may want to watch your tongue, kid. Or I'll carve it from your mouth."

"I'm sorry Albel, did I somehow manage to offend you?" Nick questioned as his calm manner carried on.

Albel's hand slid quickly from the boy's arm to his throat, making the human go stiff with nervousness. "Keep running that mouth and you'll find out," he challenged. The hybrid applied a noticeable pressure. "New toys are quite easy to find. And you are nearly broken already," he said, pointing out Nick's feeble state before he released him.

Rubbing his neck a few times, Nick replied, "You may be able to find someone else to terrorize, but will they be as interesting as I am?"

Albel made a small noise, which at least sounded amused. "Perhaps not, but don't test your luck, maggot," he warned.

Rika emerged from what was revealed as a bathroom in her hunting gear. She slid her bow over her shoulder and attached her sword sheath to her side. "Maybe I can get a few dragon kills out of this," she said idly.

Albel asked, "Hunting already? Maybe I'll join." He smirked at Nick and said, "Playing cat and mouse is quite fun. And I've already found my mouse."

Nick ignored the hybrid and said to Rika, "Look at you, now your outfit matches your attitude."

Rika slung her quiver over her shoulder and said pointedly at Nick, "You look like one of those dragon-huggers. You must be if you're so desperate as to follow him." She ignored his comment, not really understanding what he meant. Her outfit seemed perfectly casual for a hunter. Perhaps that was it, all the more proof he was a dragon sympathizer. "Whatever, loser. I'm going to have fun," she took a rope hanging by her window and threw it outside. It was already tied off and she started to climb down. Rika landed on the ground with a soft thud. Albel climbed into the window and straight up jumped to the ground. He landed gracefully on two feet, making it look like an easy task.

Fayt trekked through the woods when his ears perked to someone addressing him as his brother, "Albel I thought you said you could find another 'toy' easily. Why are you stalking me?"

The hybrid turned around and spotted a hooded boy standing there. '*Stalking?*' He remembered it was Albel after all. Fayt rubbed the back of his head. How did people confuse him with his brother so much? They didn't really look THAT similar. Fayt had blue eyes compared to his brother's angry red ones for starters. "I'm not Albel..." he started, not sure how he should greet this person.

The boy smiled sheepishly and apologized, "Oh, I'm sorry! My mistake! I haven't seen any dra... er... hybrids other than Albel, and I guess I was stupid enough to believe that he was the only one."

Fayt looked at the boy curiously. So he knew what a hybrid was? It wasn't that rare; it was just people usually avoided them if possible. He seemed quite friendly instead. "Yes, we are a... rare breed..." he said smiling warily as he rubbed the back of his head.

The boy walked towards the hybrid and introduced himself, "Well ah, anyways, I'm Nick. I didn't expect to meet anyone else out here to be honest."

Fayt paused; perhaps he was a nice human after all. He usually had to work it to fit in around them. The hybrid checked his surroundings again; still not a soul in sight. "I'm Fayt... Albel is my brother. I can't say I expected to find anyone else. They've all seemed to have fled... I'm not sure but... maybe I can at least help with the fires..." he murmured thoughtfully. Fayt did have ice breath after all. "Willing to grab a bucket, Nick?" He glanced at the boy's staff, "Or are you a mage?"

In answer to the question, Nick raised a hand, a small ball of water forming in his palm. "Would it really help anything though?" As he talked, he let the ball of water splash apart, running through his fingers before falling to the ground. "I mean I doubt any humans will be returning any time soon, and most of the buildings here aren't built to accommodate dragons."

Fayt looked back to the city. "Perhaps not... but my point was that the forest might catch on fire. The buildings can be rebuilt, but the forest..." he trailed off, looking at the massive forest around them.

"I'm also not really in any condition to be casting any spells on a large scale." Nick made a point of shifting his weight back to his staff and added, "I had a little run in with your brother. It wasn't very fun."

Fayt smiled sheepishly. "Ah yeah, sorry... He's gruff to everyone..." he spaced off at the ground briefly. He couldn't really blame Albel for turning out so messed up, yet he wished he could help his brother more. Albel had received the blunt damage in emotional trauma, unintentionally shielding Fayt from the most of it. And it showed. "He has his nice points..." the hybrid murmured. He didn't mention he could probably name them all on one hand.

"Yeah, he has nice pointy claws," Nick commented.

"Well there are some humans with water buckets in there, and some waterhorse dragons. I'd like to at least try here," Fayt declared. He moved to the nearest buildings and started using his ice breath. The ice melted instantly but put out the fires in its water form.

"Alrighty, I guess you have a point just the edges of the city should do it then." Nick said as he moved closer to the burning buildings and focused his magic to a point with his staff, and after a moment a steady stream of water burst from its tip, dousing the flames with it. The water made a satisfying hiss as it put out the fires and formed big clouds of steam.

The hybrid noticed the mage looking a bit exhausted and said, "Don't hurt yourself over it if you're tired." The boy nodded in response, turning his back to the charred building behind him and putting his weight on the wall. Fayt put out all the flames he could find. He panted briefly after, not used to using his breath so much in one go. Of course, he used it often in the shop, but not in large bursts as in to put out entire fires. Soon the flames seemed to start to fade; they at least weren't consuming everything so fast anymore. They were more like faded coals running out of things to burn. The hybrid used his breath to put out another building. "I know my brother can be a pain... but he can care for people. He just

won't admit or show it. Albel is more of someone who would prefer others to hate him. But he'll protect someone he cares for wordlessly and hates taking credit for doing good..." Fayt sighed and rubbed the side of his head. Albel was so determined to make people think he was soul-less. Though, from his mood swings, Fayt knew his brother was quite an emotional individual; he just hid it well. Suddenly, the hybrid glanced up as he heard a cracking noise. It was quite loud and growing, making him swivel his head. It was followed by a huge crashing noise as the building Nick had leaned on collapsed. Fayt flinched from the sudden noise, followed by the building collapsing on Nick. A plume of ash and dust filled the air as the building made contact with the ground. He rushed over to the mage and looked over the situation. The boy seemed to be knocked out. Fayt pulled back some debris, but Nick removed the blunt of it as he suddenly came to. "Are you alright?" the hybrid asked, crouching by Nick and staring at him with concern.

The boy turned his head to look at the hybrid and said, "That definitely wasn't my smartest idea." Nick took a step forward and stumbled, using his staff to catch himself. "Ah, give me a hand, will you?"

Fayt was about to oblige when his eyes settled on the glint of red trickling down Nick's face. His blood ran cold as he thought, *'Please no... Not now...'* Fayt jumped away from Nick like he'd been scalded by a flame. "Run..." he said quietly, strained even.

Nick gave him a questioning look and asked, "Are you alright there? You didn't get hurt too, did you?" The hybrid's hands came to his face as he turned away. Fayt quivered as the scent filled his nose. Nick took another step forward and asked in a more serious tone, "Fayt what's wrong?" A moment passed and a low thrum came from the hybrid's throat. His hands dropped slowly from his face and he turned around. Fayt stared at the boy with an uncanny smile, his baby blue eyes glowing bright, and his pupils were in slits. Nick started to look uncomfortable and said, "Fayt you're starting to look a little like Albel there. Why don't you sit down and take a break?"

The hybrid smiled, his eyes slitting to a half-lidded look. "Hmm," he looked to the side, his movements slow yet smooth, as if he was leisurely taking his time. His hand slowly rose as he looked at it. "Why sure, I'll give you a hand," he said his eyes shifted to Nick. His claws came out and Fayt turned his head back to him, his head tilting a bit in a lolled look. "I'll give you a five pointed hand," he continued. The hybrid made a sudden lurch of movement, swiping his claws at Nick. Fayt wasn't quite as fast as Albel, but he was still quite fast.

The mage stumbled backwards narrowly avoid the attack by pulling up a pillar stone between him and the crazed hybrid, whose claws collided with the stone, creating a deep gash in it. He growled and raised his claws again. He moved to go around, but more pillars rose up around the first. As he watched them, he didn't notice the steam and snorted as it were forced up his nose. The water interrupted his smell as he tried to rub it all off on his fur. The smell of blood disappeared as he wiped himself dry. His breathing slowed and he started to hold his head. Fayt stood quietly a moment in silence. His pupils dilated back to their normal size after a minute and he looked up in a bewildered state. He looked at Nick blankly for a minute in panic before softening into a saddened look. "Did I hurt you?" he asked quietly. "I didn't

mean to..."

"Don't worry about it. Not like you could control it, right?" Nick questioned as he wiped a bead of sweat off his forehead.

Fayt's ears tipped back apologetically as he nodded. "Seems you know a bit more about us than the average person. But yes... it is an unfortunate side to me I cannot... control," he trailed off.

The mage tried to get up, but his hurt leg paired with exhaustion wouldn't allow it. "Eh, I hurt my leg in the collapse, and exhausted my magic during your ahhh- your episode." Taking a deep breath, the boy extended his arm towards Fayt. "Mind giving me a helping hand now, without any additional points attached that is."

The hybrid looked back to Nick and smiled as he said, "Of course." Given his strength, Fayt would be able to carry him easily with one hand, but decided that would be awkward. He instead chose the traditional arm-around-the-shoulder technique and lifted Nick from the ground.

"Thanks," the boy said, grateful for the hybrid's help.

Fayt looked around the simmering flames and noticed a figure in the distance. They disappeared as quickly as they appeared. His ears perked straight up and he stared blankly in a daze. *'That was...'* He laughed quietly and shook his head as he mumbled, "Must've knocked my head."

"I've only learned a little through my encounter with Albel. Ironically if I had never met him, I wouldn't know how to stop your... blood rampage or whatever it's called," Nick admitted with a small grin on his face.

The hybrid directed Nick away from the ashes of the city and set him down against a tree, "I'm afraid I don't have any real medical expertise... uhh..."

"Oh that's fine, take your time," the mage said with a nod.

The pained cry of a dragon rung in the distance. "Ah, be right back," Fayt said before dashing off.

A short distance away, Rika had shot down a dragon with her bow and Albel went in for the kill. Fayt flinched at the scene, even though he was used to this from them by now. Albel, whose hunter's mode was clearly on, looked across the way at Fayt and greeted with a nasty grin, "Brother."

The white hybrid could feel himself tingle and covered his nose. "Rika, you have medical supplies, right? Could you help this injured human, please?" he asked, feeling more rustled.

"If it's a human, sure," she said nonchalantly, wiping her blade off on the dragon's scales and sheathing

it. Rika put her bow back around her back and beckoned the older brother. "Let's move, killer," she ordered. Albel made a low chuckle and followed after her, his eyes still glowing. As they moved away from the dead dragon, Albel returned to his normal state after a fair distance. Fayt lead them back to Nick. Rika rounded the tree, seeing Nick and put her hands on her hips. "Oh you didn't say THIS human," she retorted.

Looking up at Rika, the boy let out a small chuckle. "Hello again, don't worry Fayt didn't do it, a house just fell on me was all, nothing too serious." He looked down at his right leg that was bent at an impossible angle, and then back up at Rika before adding, "I'm really good at getting hurt."

"Tsk," the silverette made the small annoyed noise. She crouched down and dug into her pouch. She muttered quietly as she grabbed two thick sticks from the ground and put them on either side of his leg. Albel exchanged a look with Fayt, which the younger brother responded by tipping his ears back. Albel made a snort of laughter and looked away. "Fayt, ice it," Rika said flatly. The younger hybrid blinked before crouching and putting a thin layer of frost over the injured area. Rika took gauze from her pouch and wrapped the roll around the leg and two pieces of wood tightly. She secured it with a medical pin and motioned at Fayt who frosted the outside as well. "The frost will help with the pain and swelling. But that bone will take around three weeks to heal unless you can find a white dragon," she said, staring at the leg. "Lucky for you it wasn't bleeding. They're... so hard to persuade around wounded prey. Even with their safeguard in check," she said as she spread her arms, motioning to the hybrids on either side of her. She of course hadn't really explained the safeguard to Nick before. It so happened she was close enough to the brothers to control them in their hunter modes. It was why she could hunt with the older hybrid.

"Three weeks!" the boy moaned unhappily. "I'll be like killed or eaten by then or something."

Rika rolled her eyes, turning away and waving her hand off. "Don't be such a baby. I said you can have it healed instantly if you can find a white dragon. I'm sure for a dragon hugger like you, that's no hard task at all. We probably still have one back at the manor," she pointed ahead to her house.

Leaning back against the tree, Nick repositioned his leg to a more comfortable position. "I was bleeding and Fayt went a little loopy. I sprayed some water up his nose though, so everything was okay. Though I'm even more exhausted than before."

Albel turned back to Fayt with a smirk. There was a brief exchange of looks again as if a silent conversation had happened. The younger brother growled annoyed and turned away, pacing slightly in his little area. It was more like turning about in silent frustration. "Why that's just terrible," Albel interjected in a fake sympathetic voice. His smug look remained to prove it.

Nick yawned before asking, "So what's this safeguard you're talking about? I don't really know much about hybrids other than the fact that they exist."

Rika turned on her heel in a sort of twirl. "Well, you see they were made as weapons. So, they didn't want their soldiers to turn on their masters once they entered their hunter modes. That wouldn't be very... productive..." she answered before she stopped to smile. "So once they enter their hunter mode, they were programmed you could say, to not harm anyone they care for. Instead, they listen quite well." She put a hand on her hip and grinned at Albel.

Nick replied, "Ah I see."

Fayt fiddled with his collar silently to deal with his annoyed state. He did not like the memory of the lab in any fashion. People often took hybrids for granted as weapons; dangerous creatures. None had considered the suffering they went through every day at the lab. Fighting for survival, killing each other for scraps to prove they were the 'more effective model' for combat. Fayt never wanted to hurt anyone. He just wanted to live a normal life despite the fact he was never given a choice. He was altered before he was born to be a killer around blood. It angered him to know the state he turned into around the crimson liquid. Mindlessly killing without a shred of pity. Following orders like a dog. People hated his kind and treated them like dirt. Hybrids couldn't even fit in with dragons, which were their own kin. Dragons were just as horrible as the humans were in the lab, trying to kill them for something they couldn't help. Fayt tried so hard to help others, to show he never wanted a part of the hunter gene. Yet, most of the time, no one, dragon or human, cared. He gritted his teeth and looked at the burning city. Albel had realized this factor long ago and had given up on trying to impress the species that hated him for just being alive. Albel had all but lost his sanity it seemed. Fayt could remember still a time when his brother was kind and caring. He kept that memory to himself as it seemed to be some kind of a bad joke to others.

Albel fidgeted next to Fayt, having an idea of what was going through his brother's head. He lightly touched the scarf he wore. The younger hybrid glanced over at the movement. The scarf was given to Albel by their mother long ago before she died. It was Fayt's way of knowing his brother still felt something inside. Especially by the fact Albel threatened death to anyone that touched it. The girl shifted her weight to one side and crossed her arms, looking at the burning city. "Well, I suppose that means we're getting that remodeling done finally. Those buildings were ancient," she said nonchalantly. The fires had died down for the most part, sitting as hot embers in the darkening sky. She couldn't really tell at this point if the dark sky was from the time of day or was from the smoke rising into the air.

"Funny how everything can fall to pieces in less than a day, isn't it?" the boy talked in a lower, quieter tone of voice, his exhaustion more apparent now. "Do you really think it'll be rebuilt? The damage doesn't look that bad from a distance, but if you actually get closer it looks a lot worse." He struggled for a moment to get up without putting any weight on his injured leg and braced his weight against the tree.

Rika made a small 'snrk' sound and said, "You're not serious, right? CAN we rebuild it? How do you think it got there in the first place, genius? We built it. We have mages too y'know." Nick shrugged in

response. She took a few steps towards the manor. "Whatever, I doubt anyone would care. We probably have lots of free space now that everyone's fled the damned city. What's one more?" she asked sarcastically. Rika walked off towards the manor, not caring for the dead dragon she shot down before.

Nick spoke, "I know it can be rebuilt, but I was talking about the dragons. Will they come back and stop it from being rebuilt? It took them less than a day to demolish most of the city, what's stopping them from coming back while it's being rebuilt. Most humans don't own any working weapons; I don't think we could fend off the dragons for too long. In the end it doesn't even matter though, I guess."

"The spell thing was by surprise. We'll be ready the next time. How do you think we won in the first place and enslaved dragons? By kicking their ass. I'm sure we'll have better defense this time," she said. Rika moved into the gates surrounding the manor. She didn't care to wait for the others. The girl went around the side of the house and started to climb up the rope. She paused half way up, thinking she heard something on the roof. Rika dismissed it and climbed in the window. She threw her weapons on the bed and stripped out of her cloths. She slipped her white dress back on with a frown. God forbid her parents catch her out hunting. That was 'unlady-like'.

Fayt turned to Nick and crouched down. "Need a hand still?" he asked warily. His train of thought before made him want to be angry at Nick, but pushed it aside. That wasn't fair to the boy.

"Yeah, I would really appreciate it, else I would just be limping everywhere, or crawling even seeing as I can hardly support my own weight," the mage said, letting the hybrid help him stand. "Hey Fayt, are you ah feeling alright? You seem a little down..." he asked in concern.

Fayt looked at the ground and smiled as he assured, "Yes, it's nothing to worry about."

"Alrighty, just making sure," Nick said.

The hybrid walked with both to the manor and inside with Albel following behind. The servant scurried off like before. The house seemed quiet now, the dragons and humans that were in the lobby before dispersed. "Rika's upstairs; let's check in with her to see where you can stay," he said. Fayt guided them up the stairs. Albel walked ahead and into Rika's room. Fayt frown as he didn't bother to knock and waited a moment before following after. The black & white hybrid set Nick down in a chair in the corner and asked, "So I don't suppose there are any white dragons around?"

Rika smoothed out her dress and turned to them. "Yes, I've paged for one," she said simply and sat on her bed. Her weapons and armor had already been hidden again. A few minutes passed and there was a knock on the door. The door was already open, so it was more of just a warning to a presence. A white dragoness entered and asked, "Someone broke their leg?"

Fayt pointed to Nick and said, "Him." The dragon edged over to where Nick sat and waved her staff over his leg. It glowed a bright green for a moment and then faded.

After she was done, Nick stood up and put all his weight on his previously injured leg, testing it out. He hopped on it a few times before standing regularly and taking off the makeshift split Rika had put on it, satisfied by the way his leg had turned out. "Much appreciated!" he said turning to the dragoness healer and nodding his head in appreciation.

"It should be fine now," the dragoness said with a smile. She bowed her head briefly to Rika before leaving the room.

The boy turned his attention to the other human and asked, "So, where can I stay then, Rika?"

Rika walked to the door and turned on her heel. "This way then," she said with a beckon of her hand. The two humans walked down the halls of the manor. All seemed eerily quiet and still. The girl's heels clicked quietly on the marble floors. She looked at the doors as she passed. Finally, they came to a stop outside a door and Rika pointed briefly. "In here," she said as she opened the door. Inside the room was quite spacious as expected and had upscale furniture. The colors were in dark blues and white which blended well to the moonlight pouring through the windows. "You may stay here to rest. Page a servant if you need help," she told Nick. She turned again and walked to the doorway. Then Rika paused and looked over her shoulder. "Oh, and if you mention my hunting to anyone, I'll kill you myself," she stated before walking off.

Nick closed the shades and turned to her as she left, making a zipping motion over his lips. "Don't worry, my lips are sealed." And with that said he collapsed on the bed, letting exhaustion take over.