

((Note: This section takes place during [chapter 3](#).)

Powerful battle-honed muscles flexed under her smooth and leathery pelt; the obsidian-toned armor rippling minutely as the mirror dragoness prowled about the perimeter of the mansion. The beads, feathers, and thin cords of sinew that adorned her wings swayed slightly with her movements, but made no sound with the sandy avian appendages being firmly tucked against her back. Claws laid flat upon the ground with every confident step about the outside walls of the manor, both sets of eyes searching for an easy way in. Smaller optics of bright crimson found no temperature signatures that she should currently be aware of, but her senses did detect something else; the sounds of the city behind her in quite the ruin.

A secondary opaque layer of lids swished lightly from the sides, meeting in the center of her eye before flicking back as her audits tuned in to a different set of sounds that came from the opposite side of the manor. The dragoness, a frown marring her countenance, leaped up onto the fence and from there, with a beat of her wings and another massive lunge that made the fence groan slightly, ascended to the roof. Claws loosely gripped the shingles, stomach and chest low to the ground in a practiced hunter's maneuver as she swept up the raked surface of the roof. The fans upon her skull minimized and clutched downwards at her neck as she compacted herself just below the peak of the roof and just out of sight.

'Well, well, well. Wonder what we have here...' Astyn thought with a wicked smile curling upon her features. With every muscle in her body stilled, in the pauses between her breath, she faded into complete camouflage with her surroundings. Her ability to be seen sweeping gradually back on every breath that caused her chest to raise and fall; and with that, she listened.

She heard a voice of a young male human nearby, who sounded a bit concerned, had said, "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 other voice, a female human's, disagreed with him countered in a haughty tone, "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." Astyn turned around to look over at the direction of the voices. She saw a pale skinned young woman with long ivory hair moving into the gates surrounding the manor. The girl went around the side of the house and started to climb up the rope. When Astyn dropped her tail onto the roof, a low thump sound was heard. The noise seemed to have been heard by the woman as she paused half way up. The mirror dragoness wasn't fazed by this as she could care less whether this was going to attract any attention or not. Luckily, the girl seemed to have dismissed it as she went back to climbing into the window.

The adolescent brunette human boy below on the yard grumbled to himself, "There was also a lot less

of them..." It was true that the humans beat the dragons without modern technology before, but that was with trained warriors, who were all well-equipped and familiar with melee combat. The dragon race was also much smaller back then; before the Spell went off, the humans had technology that allowed them control a larger number of dragons than they would have been able to in the olden days. Astyn agreed with the boy and doubt that these pathetic humans could still have a chance against dragons in this brand new age. Feeling sleep trying to overtake her, the mirror dragoness took off and flew on back to her home for some sleep.

((**Note:** This section takes place during [chapter 6](#).)

She was a predator on the prowl, waiting for the slightest of moments to take advantage of. All Astyn needed was one slip or slow reaction and the small but quick individual could strike. However, while brute size was not on her side, she had the jaw and limb strength to very well make up for it. Astyn side-stepped slowly and carefully as she examined the magi dragoness from as many angles as possible with her four sharp eyes; the only heat signature visually read from the other being extremely light due to her wind barrier. The mirror dragoness watched as the others, both human and hybrid tossed attack after attack into the fray, only for most of the things to be blown away or repelled by the barrier. A wicked smirk cracked across her obsidian features and she licked her teeth with hunger for blood.

With little warning, she spun with lightning arcing wildly at her tail as she swung her body. At the arc of the swing, the electricity lunged from the balancing appendage and at the shield of spinning air. While the attacks of the others were of elements not accustomed to the wrath of a storm, a lightning bolt's path was not one that was not redirected by wind. However, in the moment before the attacks had their chance to hit their mark, the magi disappeared with clouds of purple smoke left behind to dissipate into thin air.

Several eyes fell upon her, but those that did failed to linger for long and she allowed herself to relax a bit; the tension in her muscles fading. She hadn't planned to stick around for long, but as she spied one of the hybrids, white-haired human-like one, socking the smaller human in the jaw, she couldn't resist snickering and deciding to stick around for a bit more just in case it happened again. She couldn't possibly miss any more inflicted injuries for her to later capitalize on should the opportunity arise now, could she?

The reasoning for the assault reached her ears and her fans flicked with mild amusement and apprehension, wondering if she'd be turned upon next for helping and not caring much for the idea. As a self-centered individual, Astyn often assumed that all attentions would inevitably turn upon her, whether they were positive or negative. She settled down onto her haunches from her dismal location some ten yards away, head raised as she gazed at the spectacle with oddly-quiet contemplation. It was not normal for the mirror dragoness to be so silent in the face of such wit, but she did have some sense

when it came to when to throw an insult around and when to shut her mouth. Maybe.

Her interest was more than thoroughly piqued by the hybrid's stubborn and relentless attitude. Crimson eyes followed his path until he disappeared into the forest and, putting of an aura of nonchalance, she prowled off in a different direction until she too vanished into the trees before slinking off in the direction the half-breed had went, shrouded by the foliage around her. The dragoness trailed far behind his sense range, pausing purposefully for a minute or two before fully committing to following him, and then tracking him by her acute sense of smell. Her eyelids flickered across her four optics and she focused on her heat-detecting vision, the smaller set of eyes, on seeking out any warmth in the forest. Other than the menial presences of random woodland critters she found nothing, until a slight flicker of orange made itself known.

Sweeping her head lower to the earth to drink in the strengthening scent, Astyn crept towards what she now saw was a building. A young man with black hair, blue eyes, and glasses came out of the door. He wore a black turtleneck, a green coat, and black jeans. His hands rested in his pockets and he looked calmly at the boy. "Back again?" he asked softly. The hybrid frowned slightly, watching the man cautiously. "Come inside if you want," he added before turning and walking back in. The hybrid had only recently entered, but not too much so. Unwilling to step from the safety of the underbrush and into the clearing where the house was nestled, Astyn settled down onto her stomach, claws gripping the soil as she kept her breathing low, prepared to camouflage soon if needed.

She observed in relative peace, settling down on the branch and feeling a calm settle over her. Then, while she was minding her own business, a slightly hushed voice came behind her asked, "What are you staring at?"

She seized up, every last muscle in her body freezing and her breath catching in her throat. Her form went invisible as her eyes flashed shut and she held the absent pose for a moment before peering down, getting over her initial surprise and shifting to bring the same human male who fought against the magi into focus. Astyn slunk to the opposite side of the tree, her body rubbing against the trunk as she curled around it. Nose wrinkled with disdain that had flaked off onto her from the hybrid's spiteful attitude toward the recognizable boy and she frowned deeply down at him. "Oh. It's you."

The boy cocked an eyebrow at the response and said, "I can see you're very pleased to see me." He took a few steps closer to the tree and put his hand flat against the trunk as he looked up at her before adding in, "Don't worry I'm not stalking you. Just going for a walk. You on the other hand look like you're stalking someone, or something at least." The boy shifted his weight to the front of his feet and stood on his tiptoes in an attempt to see over the thicket. Not seeing anything he asked the dragoness, "What's over there, anything interesting?"

Astyn rolled her eyes minutely at his comments, exasperated by his very presence and the persistence of his personality that was already becoming quite clear. The lass glared down at him before shifting toward the end of the limb she was perched upon, turning so that she was perpendicular to it and

clutching at it forcefully. It was here that she purposefully began to bounce upon the branch until it swayed about with wild abandon, creating as much noise as possible as it crackled and swished about other leaves and branches. Birds scattered with raucous cries to aid with such a warning mechanism. With as much nonchalance as possible, Astyn plopped herself from her perch. "I'm sorry, what did you say?" she purred easily, eyes narrowing with mischief as she partially turned her back upon him, head still turned and a single optic still trained upon him. She began to stroll from where she was at, migrating from her position in hopes that the boy would be the only one discovered should the hybrid heed her warning. As she tucked herself behind a tree out of vision, she froze once more, her breathing halting momentarily as she listened.

"I said, what's over th-," the mage stopped when the door opened and out came the annoyed hybrid. "Never mind," he sighed. The boy turned his attention from Astyn and asked the hybrid, "What are you doing here?"

The hybrid sneered, showing his fangs, and snarled, "What am I doing here? What are you doing here, you stupid little human?"

The boy's body vanished for a moment before he popped back into existence just a few feet forward, this time on the same side of the thicket as the hybrid who blinked bewildered in response. "Stupid little human?" he repeated what the hybrid had said, chuckling at the insult. "Just taking a walk," he spat.

The curious man glanced out the door and asked in a quiet volume that Astyn was able to pick up, "Who is it?"

The hybrid flickered his eyes to the side, but remained quiet. His yellow eyes went back to the mage, burning into him with a challenge. He retorted, "Stupid is too light for you, isn't it?"

The mage took a few steps towards the hybrid, spheres of pure energy forming in his hands. "It's funny; before I met you, I didn't think anyone could have a worse attitude than Albel did, then again, nor did I think that anyone would say 'thank you' with a punch to the face." His fist clenched as he stared down the hybrid, squeezing the energy spheres back out of existence.

The hybrid took a step back as he yelled, "I'm just surprised you can actually think. No wonder you got that wrong. I don't need the help of some stupid human! It was your fault the entire hybrid mess was created in the first place! I don't want your help and I don't need it!" The hybrid finished quietly, "You're all monsters."

The boy took another step forward to the hybrid, Astyn could have sworn that this human was either fearless or just plain dumb. "You were totally in the position to fight back, or even decline our help when you were passed out cold on the ground right?" At this point, he was clenching his knuckles so hard they began to turn white. The hybrid opened his mouth briefly and then shut it with a frown. A deep blush of embarrassment filled his cheeks at the accusation of being passed out.

The hybrid yelled back, "And what about you?! You humans created us! You're the real monsters who wanted to use us as weapons. We're a reflection of your hatred and destruction. The blood we shed is on your hands!" He backed against the wooden post of the awning over the cabin and sneered at the teen boy. Lightning flickered over his body in various places as a threat display.

"Ha!" the mage laughed out loud. "I'm the monster, am I?" he screamed at the hybrid, rage seeping back into his voice momentarily. "Why don't you prove to the world what a monster you really are. Go on attack me, you know you want to. Prove that psychotic dragon, I had to save you from, right." He paused for a second before speaking again, this time in a much quieter, almost sad sounding tone, "Go on, take out whatever rage you harbor towards my species on me." Pulling up his sleeve he took out a concealed blade and flipped it open. The hybrid gripped the beam behind him as if he was afraid he was going to get hurt. "I'm a monster huh?" the boy muttered to himself quietly. His eyes flickered to the blade for a moment before he pressing it to his forearm and dragging it across his skin, leaving an angry red gash. Blood oozed out of the wound and the boy dropped the blade to the ground before looking back up at the hybrid. "I'll show you what it's like to be a monster."

The hybrid angrily spat, "Yeah I bet you're dying to watch the monster you created. To watch the result of ripping our families apart for your own twisted desires. I've never killed anyone and here you are, a human of course, inviting me to my first taste of murder."

"What about me?" the mage asked starting to raise his voice again. "What about ME?" he asked again. "I no more choose to be human than you choose to be a hybrid!" His eyes narrowed again and he stomped one foot onto the ground, the earth rumbling in response. Astyn was caught by surprise as she tried her best to keep steady against the minor earthquake. "I will not be blamed for the atrocities my race has committed!" the human yelled. Suddenly, something started to go wrong with the hybrid. His eyes shut in tension before he opened them back up to show bright gold irises and pupils narrowed to slits, giving them a draconic appearance. Then he rushed forward at the mage. The boy stayed rooted to the spot as he said coldly, "I'm sure you'll love it." A smile formed on the mirror dragoness's face as she thought that brutal show as going to be good.

The hybrid probably would have mauled him badly had the man coming out of the house not shout, "Akuma, stop!" The hybrid slowed to a stop a short distance from the boy. Akuma glared at the mage, but stood in place. A moment passed and his legs started to quiver before finally collapsing under him and his eyes flickered back to normal. Astyn snorted quietly as she was disappointed that the show had been ruined by the man. Akuma panted quietly as the man told the boy softly, "I must ask you to refrain from doing that. His condition doesn't allow for a hunter state."

The mage shook his head as he looked down at Akuma, a hint of remorse flashing in his eyes. "I'm sorry," the boy muttered almost inaudibly. "I am a monster, but I don't think I can be considered a human anymore." Looking up at the man, he asked, "Who are you?"

Akuma panted heavily before regaining his breath. He gripped the grass in his fingers and gritted his teeth, putting his feet under himself. The man walked out further and said simply, "Dion." He was next to Akuma now. The hybrid's legs trembled as he slowly started to stand. He cursed silently under his breath in a string of angry mutters. When he straightened out, he teetered to the side, stumbling. Dion grabbed him from behind and helped him to stand. "Careful, your energy is spent," he cooed. Akuma turned so he could grab onto the man for support. His legs started to bend again and Dion shook his head. He picked the hybrid up under his back and knees despite the child's grumbling. "You're not one for children, are you?" Dion asked the teenager with a small breathless laugh.

"I erm. Not a problem with kids, but..." the boy trailed off. The mage sighed and raised his palm up ever so slightly a transparent green mist flowing from his hand to Akuma. Astyn could see with her heat vision the white color, which was the energy, being transferred from the human over to the hybrid. "There, feel free to punch me again just like last time," the mage said. The hybrid flinched and frowned before he turned his head and buried his face in Dion's shirt. The man and the boy smiled slightly at the gesture. The mage looked back at the man and asked, "You said your name was Dion, right?" He paused briefly before saying, "My friend... I wanted to help him, or all hybrids even." Another pause came before he continued, "I wanted to find a way to remove or turn off the hunter gene, and as far as I'm aware, you're the only one with any remaining knowledge on how I could do so."

Dion's face flashed a look of surprise before going back to a smile. "Oh, you know other hybrids?... Friend..." he laughed quietly.

The boy said, "Yeah, Fayt and Albel; although I don't know if I would call Albel a friend really, he just tolerates me."

"I'm glad they're doing well... well yes it so happens that I worked with hybrids in the lab... Including this one here," Dion nodded at Akuma. "Just a hatchling at the time, but all the same," he turned towards the house and started to walk. "Albel and Fayt were also under my care... Albel was... delicate to manage," he said, having to pause for a moment. "Taking away their hunter state... that would be something... they'd fit in better at least," the man mused before they went into the house. Astyn leapt off the tree and glided down to the door. The talk about hybrids made her curious about what the strange species were like and if there were ways to tick them off for her sadistic pleasure the next time she meets one. She saw the orange forms of the people through the wooden barrier and tried to make out what they're saying, since she couldn't hear them. From the looks of it, she guessed that they were discussing the cure for the hunter state. After about a minute, she saw the mage walking over to the window. The mirror dragoness took still and turned invisible to his eyes so that he couldn't see her spying. The words he said sounded a bit more audible by the margin as the glass was blocking out most of the sound. To Astyn it sounded like the boy wasn't good at healing magic and that he needed to find someone named Chi. Then she looked back to Dion who was waking up the hybrid. It looked like he wanted Akuma to help the boy find this Chi person. When the hybrid and the mage walked over to the door, Astyn quickly dashed away before the duo could see them.

She lied down and camouflaged against the grass as she watched the pair exit the house. Akuma walked outside without looking at the human and sniffed the air. "This way," he muttered as he walked into the forest.

The mage smirked before leaping to the air and shifting his form into that of a humming bird before flying over Akuma's head. Then he dropped down as a mouse right in between the hybrid's horns. "Tally ho and away!" he cried out mischievously.

Akuma snarled loudly at the mouse and raised his hands, extending his claws. They stopped over the little rodent, hovering and twitching angrily. "Get off," he hissed, continuing to walk away into the distance. Astyn snickered at how funny and silly the way the hybrid boy looked. She would have followed them to see more conflicts between the two, but now she was starting to feel hungry. The mirror dragoness went off to hunt for food in the forest. It was disappointing that she was going to end up losing the pair, but at least the next time she met them she would know to jump on the Akuma's head to mess with him.