

((**Note:** This section takes place during [Chapter 15](#).)

Zeditha flew above the forest with her emerald green sharp eyes open for food. Prey was increasingly scarce these days; it was difficult to catch so much as a rabbit. Giving up for the moment, she decided to risk the city. Sometimes being small was an advantage. She slipped silently through the dark streets and heard whispers of an army. Deciding it was unsafe, she flew away. But as she leaped into the night, an archer pierced one wing with an arrow. It was poorly aimed and almost deflected off her dark purple scales, but it had enough force to rip a small hole. Landing with less grace than usual, she ran away back to the safety of the forest. Eventually stumbling across a town, she climbed into a tree and rested in the branches. After making sure she was well hidden, she went to sleep.

((**Note:** The following sections takes place during [Chapter 18](#).)

Zeditha couldn't disappear as she wasn't a black ghost, but she can dodge the humans' attacks easily. She even whipped some humans with her long tail, making them drop weapons or double over in pain. Her tail after all was sharp. Or at least, very thin at the tip. Spotting the chained slaves, she darted over to them. "We're going to free you," she said. "Don't go attacking us, though!" Starting at one end of the line, she attacked the chains, finding the weak spots in the metal and picking locks with her tail. The whiptail dragonet smiled when all the chained dragons were released. "This way!" she said, moving more slowly this time towards the door. The slaves followed after her, all of them eager to get their taste of freedom.

One of the humans saw where they were going and pointed at them. "Stop them!" he told the men.

Another man shot down the command and reasoned, "No! We need all the men here to defend this camp from the dragons. We'll hunt them down later. For now, we kill those blasted scabies." Then Aeolus's lightning breath electrocuted him and let the toasted man drop stiff and dead. That got the other guy back on his toes and back into action immediately. He fired off an arrow and it shot an ember dragon on his chest. The ember let out a pained roar as the flapping of his wing started to get slower and his altitude started to decrease.

Aeolus told the night magi, "Eitri, send Drakor out of the battle immediately." The spellcaster used his teleportation magic to warp the ember dragon out of the scene.

Zeditha saw what happened as she had poked her head out just in time to see and hear what was said and done. Blinded by a brief storm of anger, she ran towards the man who had shot Drakor and began to attack him. She gave him many small but sharp bites and scratches, and she moved like lightning. In a flash, she had her tail around his neck and her wings open for balance. She tightened the noose around

his neck and he soon fell to the ground, unconscious. Satisfied, Zeditha freed her tail and gave him a slash across the neck that should bleed him to death before he could wake up. She padded back to the freed slaves and beckoned them before making her way out of the town and towards the patch of trees where the ember dragon was.

In the woods, Hewey took the arrow out of Drakor's wound and began healing him with magic. "Rest easy now; it'll be alright," the healer told the groaning ember. He saw Zeditha approaching them and asked, "Oh hey, do you need some healing, too?"

The whiptail looked back at the dragons following her. She was faster than any of them; after all, they had been kept in poor conditions. They were all pretty pitiful to look at with their whip scars and skinny bodies with ribs visibly tight against the skin. "I don't," she replied. "But some of these dragons might. They've only just escaped from the humans." Her tail flicked in pity and anger as the large group of dragons caught up with her. Most were panting and a few lagged behind. Zeditha padded over to the healer with interest and asked, "Could you teach me to heal? I get the feeling I might not be as useful as I'd hoped, otherwise. And you'll probably need another set of paws here." She gestured towards the freed slaves, who were mostly flopping down on the grass.

The healer made a short laugh before saying, "I'm surprised that you want to learn healing magic after you were dead set on not wanting to use magic ever again. But at least there's a difference between healing magic and offensive magic. One saves lives and the other tries to take them. I get the feeling you would prefer the one that saves lives, given your tragic history." He smiled and continued, "Of course I'll teach you magic. I mean two healers are better than one, right? It makes my work easier, instead of having all the load on me." Then he went over to the closest slave nearby and started to explain, "Now in order to heal this dragon, you would need to tap in to your magic energy. Then you pour in your thoughts and desires to heal and mend in order to turn that magic energy into healing powers. And finally, you focus on what part of the body you want to heal and release the energy onto it. Get all that?"

Zeditha smiled crookedly. "I understand all, but one bit," she said. "How do I tap into my magical energy? Where is it?"

Hewey explained, "You got to feel for the magic energy in your body; deep down to your heart. That's where most of our magic comes from."

Zeditha saw humans fleeing the city; some had children with them and were terrified. Turning away from the terrible sight as they were blasted from the sky, she turned to one of the slaves. He needed help; there were many whip wounds on his side. Looking into herself, she found her magic energy at last, in a place she had never before thought to look: buried under her anger. *'Of course,'* she thought. *'I buried magic in anger, didn't I?'* Focusing the energy to healing the whip wounds, the gashes closed. The whiptail also felt some of her anger towards humans lift. Hearing a scream, Zeditha turned around sharply. It was a human child, screaming in terror as the dragons attacked relentlessly from above.

Something snapped and Zeditha ran out into the field.

Hewey saw her leaving and asked, "Hey, where are you going?" His words had fallen on deaf ears as the dragonet ignored him. Grabbing the child gently in her claws, she carried her out of the battle and to the hill.

Running halfway back, the whiptail shouted to Aeolus. "Stop this! How can you murder innocent children?! And if you do, how are you any better than the soldiers who killed our brethren?" Her tail lashed angrily, but not with anger at the humans. No, her anger was now at her own kind. "Don't all creatures deserve their lives?"

((Note: Zeditha naming Mia is canon to the RP, but Eitri's attack on her is not.))

Zeditha ran away into the forest. When she was sure the horde was far enough away, she nestled the baby down in some moss and sang. The baby was soon asleep. "I name you Mia," she said lovingly. The dragonet curled herself around Mia like a mother keeping her babies close to her. She was going to keep the baby warm and protect her from all predators with open eyes.

But soon, flapping of wings were heard in the distance as well as a draconic scent. Zeditha lifted her head up and saw the night magi from before coming at her. "Give me the human baby, traitor!" Eitri hissed.

The whiptail yelped and quickly got up to take Mia away from danger. She picked up the baby with her mouth by the scruff of her onesies and ran away. Having her sleep disturbed by movement, Mia woke up and started to cry. Zeditha thought reassuringly, *'Don't worry little one, everything will be alright once we get away from that awful lizard.'* As she ran past trees, plants & rocks and around them, Eitri cast lightning bolts at the dragonet who evaded the strikes. Things were now getting tense with not just Mia's life in peril, but also Zeditha's as well. As the distance between the pursuer and his targets got wide quickly, the night magi decided to teleport himself right in front of the two with his lime green eyes glaring at them. The dragonet got astonished and gasped in fear as she bumped into him.

Eitri swatted Zeditha away with the back of his front foot and she flew across the air for a short bit before falling down on a misfit pygmy. "Ack! Get off of me!" yelled the misfit as he tried to pull himself from under the whiptail's body. The dragonet felt a burning sensation from the hit as well as a bit of pain from hitting the ground and the pygmy. She raised her head off the ground and saw that Eitri was about to cast another lightning spell at Mia. Adrenaline rushed to her mind to get Zeditha to act quickly before the infant suffers her death. She spewed a fireball at the night magi's claw and burned him. As Eitri let out a pained roar, Zeditha took advantage of the distraction to rush over to the warping crystal that the misfit pygmy had dropped after the crash. After grabbing it, she ran over to Mia as the night

magi doused the fire on his claw with his water magic. Then Eitri looked down and saw the whiptail with the baby. He sent magic energy to his claw again as he sought to destroy them both with his lightning bolt. Zeditha quickly used the warping crystal to teleport herself and Mia away, not caring where they'll end up. The lightning bolt missed as crystal flashed and made the duo disappear from sight.

((**Note:** This section takes place during [chapter 19](#).)

After the escape, the light blue glow of the warping crystal faded and the object turned grey. The warping crystal had lost the last of its energy. Zeditha flew on gently through the forest, singing softly to the baby to get her to sleep, heading in no particular direction except further into the forest. After finding a safe spot to take care of the baby, the whiptail went to look for foods to feed her. She picked up herbs and hunted the wildlife. Then after her return, she fed Mia with chewed-up herbs and meat and gave her water from the pools and streams in the forest.

After a while, Zeditha moved along the river, fishing sometimes and picking the herbs for Mia. She had decided to follow this river as far as the edge of the forest, or the sea, whichever came first. As she dived into the water for fish, she heard humming, mangled by the water but a sweet tune. She flew out of the water and hid herself, watching to see who it was. A pink-skinned girl with dragon horns, wings, tail, and feet. She was also carrying a basket filled with herbs, clams, and a crayfish. *'A halfling!'* thought Zeditha in surprise with a smile. *'I guess it's proof that humans and dragons can work together.'* Then she had a thought. Maybe this halfling would help her? It couldn't be easy to find someone who would cooperate with both dragons and humans, so why not take the chance? Turning quickly, she collected Mia from her little bed of moss and zipped carefully after the halfling.

The girl walked along the forest with a tree house coming into sight. Her tail swished idly to her hummed tune. Pretty soon, she stopped and turned around curiously. "Oh, um... hello. Did you need something?" she asked warily. Her wings folded against her back as she gave the dragonet a once-over. The girl's violet eyes fell on the small human baby and a look of astonishment trickled over her face. A grin crossed her face as she chuckled, "Looks like you got your hands full."

Zeditha put Mia down and admitted, "Mouth full, more like. Hands not much good for carrying." The whiptail leaned briefly onto her hind legs, freeing her front paws to spread them. She only stayed in that position for a second or two, before she slumped back down onto all fours. "I couldn't help spotting you be the river and... I wondered if you'd help me look after Mia here." She gently licked the baby's face.

The halfling mindlessly chirped, "Oh certainly. I'm quite the doctor myself actually. Humans are funny around my type, so Dion let me practice on him for human anatomy." Then she went on to asked, "Say, where did you get the baby?"

The whiptail answered, "It's a bit of a long story... But if you'd be willing to listen, I'm winning to tell." She sat down neatly, tail flicking at the tip as a small smile formed on her face.

"Of course," said the girl stepping forward, bending down and picking up the baby. Zeditha restrained herself from trying to grab Mia as the halfling picked her up. Even though it was only two hours, she had already grown very attached to the baby. "Come up to my house. I have to put these supplied away," she said, motioning at the basket hooked on her arm. The halfling spread her wings and fluttered up onto the tree house landing, stepping inside the cabin-like tree house. Zeditha decided to climb the tree instead of flying up and dug her claws into the trunk. She was up the tree in a matter of seconds; her climbing was as good as a squirrel's. She stopped just inside the door, as if needing permission to enter. There she saw the halfling setting the baby down on the couch. The girl looked at the dragonet for a bit before sighing. She walked to the pantry to put away her herbs. Then she turned back to Zeditha and laughed, "You gonna tell me the story through the window or what?"

Smiling, Zeditha slowly padded in with her claws tapping softly on the wooden floor. The halfling put down her now empty basket and walked over to the couch, sitting next to the baby whose tiny hand she held. She started to hum a soft tune to Mia, a calming magic. The whiptail flew quietly to the edge of the couch and began to add her own harmony to the tune. Looking softly at Mia, she jumped off the arm of the couch and nuzzled the baby's face. "The story is a long one..." she said. "And sad in places. Are you sure you want to hear it?"

The girl stopped her humming and sat back on the couch. "Ah yes. I have grown up in a sad tale. My entire species is just one sad story. I do not think another will bother me," she said as she stared at the window across the room and propped her feet onto the coffee table.

Zeditha smiled sadly and looked around the room for the best perch. She decided to land and curl up like a cat on the halfling's lap; it was warm. "A lot of my life is rather dull as I grew up with my parents, living in a forest," she began. "But I think the real story begins when an old magi dragon taught me magic. Or rather tried to; I didn't get the hang of it. Not that I had a chance to, because a group of human soldiers came on horseback and overwhelmed us. I tried to fight, but I soon realized I must flee or be killed. So I ran back into the forest and killed any soldier who came after me. When no more soldiers came, I went back and found my mentor's dead body, mutilated and hacked. I was so angry and so terrified. I hated humans then; I hated them for what they had done to my brief friend. I hated them for what I thought them to be; brutal, savage, mutilating murderers with no regard for intelligent life. I had always been taught to be cautious of humans, but never to hate them. Experience alone taught me that.

Here comes another uninteresting chunk of my life. I went back to live in the forest where I had always lived and my hatred festered, but grew distant. A few years after the death of my mentor, I was searching through a small town for food. There seemed to be no prey about in the forest. I tried to avoid humans entirely, but as I flew away, they shot me with arrows. My wing was ripped and I couldn't fly. Luckily, a group of dragons spotted me. They named themselves the Vulture Horde, and their leader

Aeolus. Their healer repaired my torn wing, and I agreed to join their horde.

Only a small time afterwards, we went off to attack a human town where many dragons were still being held captive; most were pygmies. I joined the small group of dragons that was to free the slaves, rather than joining the larger group of dragons who were killing any human in sight from far above. I saw the cruelty laid on the poor pygmies and my old hatred flared. But what I hadn't been prepared for was a surge of pity for the humans. I was learning the art of healing magic from the Horde's healer, when I heard screams from the crowd of humans who were trying to flee. The screams of men would not have bothered me; they were the savage murderers, but it was the screams of the innocent women and children. I carried a child out of the fighting and screamed at Aeolus to stop. I told him that this ruthless killing made us no better than the humans. I told him that the innocent can be spared. I told him of mercy; I told him to let these humans live. But he would not listen, so I ran back, gently took Mia from the arms of her weeping mother, and I ran away. Just when I thought we were safe, the horde's night magi came after me to get to Mia. I tried to escape him, but then he caught up to us and knocked me away from Mia. Luckily, I found a warp crystal and used it to save ourselves from him.

Since then, I've been taken to a different forest, moving steadily away from where the spot I came to. Since I don't know anything about human babies, I don't know what to do with poor Mia. I took her because she would be killed, but without her mother who was, she might die. I simply don't know how to care for her." Her story finished, Zeditha looked lovingly and sadly at Mia, lying just to the side. Sighing, she laid her head down on her front paws, waiting patiently for a response.

The halfling girl, who had been nodding every now and then through the story, said, "Sounds like a lot of dragons have similar stories for slavery. Parents killed and given a bad experience with humans. I won't say sorry for your losses. That never helps I found..." She paused to look back over at whiptail, "What I can do is offer words of comfort. Not all humans are bad. It's all in the upbringing. Some humans are bitter and force it on their innocent children until the children are misguided into finding it natural behavior. But I have seen kindness in humans." A smile crossed her face as she explained with a blooming sensation, "My species, hybrids, were born and created in a lab. We never knew the concept of parents. We were made for tools of war to humans. Experimented on, beaten, starved, and killed. And yet, I never had to experience much of it due to the kindness of one human. When I was small, I was viewed as a 'dud' in the hybrid standards. So I was to be killed for I was useless. But a kind scientist smuggled me out and raised me. He did this for many hybrid duds. It made me realize that really...no living thing, sentient or not, is alike."

Zeditha smiled and said, "I thought it was about how they were raised, from the moment I heard the screams of the innocent children being slaughtered simply for being human. I'd always had a hatred of humans, but now it's towards my own kind, dragons. If we kill them for being humans, while they enslaved us for being dragons, then aren't we worse than them? My hope is that, if Mia can be raised with love, not hate, then we can all win this war. No more need die." Her tail hung off the hybrid's lap. The tip of it curled and flicked, much like a cat's.

The hybrid gave the dragonet a couple short pets in agreement to her statement. Zeditha thrummed as she was stroked; it felt nice. The girl said, "Yes, grown men and women are more liable for their decisions. But children shouldn't have to suffer for the decisions of their parents. They are more easily swayed than adults. And that can be used for good or bad." Then she sighed quietly before explaining, "But I say power to you if you want to raise her with care. You might find the northeast here suitable. The Aquarians have set up here to try and make peace between humans and dragons. Their city, Windfall, was rebuilt for that purpose."

Rubbing her head against the hybrid's hand like a cat, she considered her options. "I think," she said finally. "That Mia needs a foster mother. I certainly can't care for her adequately, especially once she gets bigger. She'll soon outgrow me, even before she learns to walk. But I want to stay with her, so she can grow up with dragons around that are kind to her. Except that the forest in Solomos is my home and always has been..." Her voice trailed back to an uncertain hum. "Why don't you live with the Aquarians?" she asked, suddenly. "If they want to make peace between humans and dragons, then surely a hybrid like you is something to be revered, not scorned?"

The hybrid paused looking as if she was thinking about her answer. "Well you see... hybrids are not humans or dragons. We are something only from the northeast of Rudvich, so I doubt the Aquarians even know what we are. Windfall was the closest to the lab, so they know most about our kind. And... one of us... is..." She paused again as her jaw shifted her jaw. "He gave us a bad reputation here. Yet the village never bothered us because of it. They were scared. And he's still here to boot. I've tried to reason with him he can relax because the lab is gone. But he is so bitter, not to mention humans and dragons were already ornery towards us for our reputation. We were weapons of war," she explained.

Zeditha spat, tail swishing angrily. "Who would do that?" she hissed. "Creating a living, thinking person, only to have them kill others? You use the term weapon as if you were intended to be merely tools. Where is the morality in that?" Her tail swished angrily, tapping against the couch.

The hybrid looked at the floor with a solemn look on her face. "Scientists. They use animals to attack things, so why not dragons they figured. Except they took it one step forward and manipulated our genetic structure with human DNA and multiple breeds of dragons. To try and find a deadly combination of traits to make us better killer. Think of it as mass sped up crossbreeding and in compact human size. We were made to be under their control. Only two hybrids came out of that place after growing up there. The rest are dead and forgotten. But humans view us as out of control beasts they failed to harness. Dragons view us as abomination to nature. Lose-lose," she laughed softly.

The whiptail shook her head. "Humans can be so cruel... And the dragons, they should be more understanding. You have nowhere to go; they should let your kind live somewhere. Maybe a civilization of hybrids and halflings? Start a town; send secret messages to all the others? I could do that part, I'm quite fast," she smiled proudly.

The girl laughed aloud and said, "A nice motion but...not much of a point. See, there are only... 4 of us

including myself left. We aren't bothered much by either species anymore because as I said, one of us is quite psychotic and struck fear into everyone. He's very dangerous and I feel his brother is the only one keeping him tied to normality. It's quite sad but at the same time, it lets me live a solitary, peaceful life. I'm pretty sure our youngling is the only one who gets picked on. But that's simply because he's still a child. Even if he pretends otherwise." She chuckled again.

Zeditha was fascinated. She rolled onto her back and looked up at the hybrid. "Tell me more about the others," she asked, eyes shining with curiosity.

The hybrid looked taken aback by this request, but she explained anyway. "Well... I suppose it's safe to say we all have some unique abilities and specialties. We used to have a genetic curse that made us go rampant around blood but... a friendly mage and a scientist helped fix that." She smiled, "My specialty is healing. I have the healing power of a white dragon and I can heal or soothe with music. I know a small degree of water magic, but just for healing." She took an ocarina out of her pocket and showed it briefly. "Akuma is our little one. He is an assassin class hybrid. I was supposed to be but as you see, I was a mess up. I just look like a halfling," she shrugged. "They're supposed to be able to shift between dragon and human form. I got stuck in the middle. Akuma takes the form of a gold dragon, but has electric magic. His human form made him also labeled as a dud like me however because he has tiny little horns on his head. Little nubs." Then she giggled, "I actually think it looks cute. But he's very stubborn and doesn't get along well with anyone." She looked at the ground. "Fayt is one of the only two streamlined battle class hybrids alive, meaning they were considered successful outcomes. They look like wingless dragons but walk like humans; they even have thumbs. They were meant to have the strength of a larger dragon in the compact human size so they can utilize agility as well. Fayt is a smart mechanic. But he's very kind, which is a nice counter to his brother. Fayt specializes in ice magic," she explained. There was a faint click of her teeth as she paused between the explanations. It was obvious she wasn't fond of speaking of the next hybrid. "Albel is the other streamline. And... the psychopathic one. He is cruel and cold. He killed everyone in the lab. Scientists, dragons, and other hybrids save for his brother and... barely Dion, the scientist that raised him. He's so far gone but... Fayt seems to calm him one way or another. I just... I wanted him to be able to rest easy after that horrid lab was destroyed. Fayt says he was kind once, that lab destroyed him. The conditions were unbearable."

Zeditha shook her head sadly. "So, the humans created 'weapons' to be capable of destroying a species and hoped to keep them contained in appalling conditions? Don't they know anything about dragons at all?" She flipped back onto her stomach; it felt exposed, tummy-up, and anyway the spikes along her back must be prickly.

The hybrid half-nodded, "It worked well when humans had technology. See we had death collars on. One press of a button and it was a fast shock and a short stop. Not to mention the guns..." She fiddled with her hands.

"Could you teach me to heal?" the whiptail asked, changing the obviously difficult subject. "I've tried magic a few times, but I never managed to get good at it. First my teacher got slaughtered by human

warriors, then I left another teacher to save Mia from the Vulture Horde," she smiled sadly.

The girl was taken aback again. "Well... sure, I guess. But I've never really taught anyone magic before. It came naturally to me," she smiled. "I can try, though... Do you have milk for the baby on that note? Humans are mammals. Dragons eat meat from birth but humans... they eat squishy soft food and drink lots of a special mother's milk. Normally mammal mothers produce it naturally for their baby. But... humans do have some artificial stuff in the city," she explained.

Zeditha sat up at the thought of milk. "I never thought about that," she said, worried. "I chewed up food for her, but... Do you have any? If not, I can run to the city. But Mia would slow me down." She looked sorrowfully at the peacefully sleeping baby.

The hybrid shook her head and answered, "I do not but..." She gently moved the dragonet off her lap and to the side so she could stand. The whiptail squeaked softly in response. Then she jumped neatly to the floor and clipped under the table to follow the girl over to a pouch on the kitchen bar-counter. There was the jingling sound of metal coins as a couple pieces of silver fell into her hand. "Humans trade with precious metals and gems for currency. Mainly copper, silver, and gold. This much should get you some baby food and milk," she explained, walking back to Zeditha and holding out the coins in her hand.

The whiptail took the coins gently in her mouth, and then put them carefully onto the floor. Then she sat back and asked, "How am I supposed to carry them? I don't have hands, really, and I'll drop them if I carry them in my mouth. Or swallow them." She looked a bit worried.

The hybrid stared briefly at her in thought before saying, "Well let's see..." Then she looked around her kitchen for something and smiled. "Ah of course," she picked up the basket she was using earlier. "Just use this. You can carry the coins and supplies together. it's just wicker so it should be quite light for you," she explained, setting the basket softly on the couch. She looked at the sleeping baby. "I'll look after her while you're out. Though at the rate babies sleep, she'll probably be asleep still when you get back," she smiled.

Zeditha took it carefully, testing different ways of carrying the small basket. She settled on holding it gently in her mouth, which allowed all four of her paws to be available for running. She carefully collected the coins into it. "I'll hunt while I'm out. I think a rabbit or two will fit in here with some milk..." said the whiptail. She took the basket into her mouth carefully and took a few steps, getting the hang of keeping the basket away from her paws. Satisfied she could carry it, she put the basket down on the table and jumped up beside Mia. She gave the sleeping baby a brief lick, then went back to the basket. "Which direction is the town?" she asked.

The hybrid pointed out the way to Windfall. "Over there, you'll see it just over the tree line very easily. It's quite close actually," she laughed.

Zeditha thanked the hybrid and ran off with the basket towards Windfall. As soon as she got near the

plains, she climbed the tallest tree she could see and looked out from its tallest branches. She couldn't see the Vulture horde anywhere; she felt sure she would see them if they were near enough to spot her. So she took a run-up, jumped out of the tree, and flew towards Windfall.