

((Note: The following sections take place during [chapter 13](#).)

Things have been going well since the previous events. Colin has been gathering the herbs he was looking with little to no problems, and now has his eyes on the last batch. "Just those and I'm done," he said as he advances. Tension suddenly took over when a shadow came over him and seemed to be getting bigger, signaling something. Swiftly, he moved out of the way, feeling the ground rumble and looked to where the shadow was.

It was a dragon with olive scales and long spines. He recalls the details and figured this could be a poisonous dragon, somewhat larger than average. Another dragon descended on the ground, this one had brown scales and blue stripes on the top down to the tail, fitting the description of a swift whiptail. The whiptail scolded, "You missed! I told you to let me take it!"

The olive dragon argued back, "Shut it. He can't run away."

Colin felt his body tensed, but he unsheathed his lance with his left hand and gathered energy on his right, eyes locked onto both dragons. "Walk away, now," he said.

The amused whiptail said, "Oh, how cute. He thinks he's all tough. Let's do something about that." He then swiftly moved his tail to lash the young man.

Despite the speed, Colin waited for an attack. He moved to the ground and slashed his double-bladed lance toward the assaulting tail. He heard a pained roar as he cut the tail off, but he shifted his attention on the olive and moved his right hand as a slash to release the wind energy. The effect wasn't great, but wind blade caused a gash to the olive's flank. Getting up, he saw the two coming, drew the dagger, and waited for them once again. The whiptail came first to snap its jaws at him, but Colin moved to the right and used his lance to send a slash across the whiptail's side. The olive however, got close and bit Colin's left arm. He shouted in pain then through gritted teeth before he pierced the dragon's head with the dagger. The olive lost his grip and fell to the ground after Colin removed the dagger. The whiptail saw what happened in disbelief and tried running. Colin dropped his lance to take out a vial, pop it open and pour it on the dagger. Taking aim, he threw the dagger toward the fleeing dragon. He saw it hit the mark, making it only several seconds before the poison took effect.

For now, he placed pressure on the punctured wounds to try to stop the bleeding while getting another vial. "Just great..." he muttered. Seeing the right one, he prepared himself. Unrolling the sleeve, he popped the vial and poured it over the wound. It hurts to do so, but he saw the liquid already doing its job. Until then, he took out a bandage and wrapped it around the wound. As he does, he looked at his kill. "I didn't think this stuff I was taught would actually work. I guess that dagger's not the only thing saving me." When the man finished, he got his lance, extracted the herb, and went to the area where the whiptail ran off. Sure enough, he found him already turned to a corpse. He got his dagger back and cleaned both it and the lance with cloth before putting them away. He looked at the whiptail for a

couple seconds before walking away. As much as he would like to, he couldn't let either dragon live after they attacked him. It would only leave them as a witness to tell other dragons about his strengths and then they would look and bring him down. The risk is simply too great, but the fact that he killed two more dragons haunt him on his way back to the city.

The pain stayed along with the disturbing thought, but Colin pressed on to Windfall. He thought he saw some people, but he dismissed the thought. He wasn't sure which path he took since he lost track, only that it's one that leads out of the forest. Finally, he reached the exit and the city was in sight. He checked his injury and noted the red spots from the wound and the blood that already leaked out before he treated it. The spots from the wound still seem to be going, but not so much. The sight itself might disturb some people, so he decided to have his sleeve cover what it could. The unyielding pain caused him to hold the arm most of the time.

Finally arriving at the city, his eyes were greeted by vehicles being towed away. It's an odd sight, since they all show no signs of wreckage. He found a bulletin board and went to take a look to find a post explaining the ban of vehicles. He could find so many things wrong with this ban that people won't just accept it so easily. People need vehicles for transportation. And what if there's an emergency involving people needing medical attention, or a burning building, or his main reason for disagreeing with it, shipments? There's an order that's supposed to be here later on. So unless they have an alternative method for transportation, this ban is going to create a lot of problems. He lets out an annoyed sigh and heads to where he's supposed to go, located in the market area.

Colin made it to his grandfather's shop, and when his situation was noticed, he was asked to go to the other room to take care of them. The herbs he gathered were placed on a table before he went to the washroom to check his wound. Removing the bandages, he could tell the bleeding has gone down a lot, and he will only need to apply the proper care which he can get in the room. Time passed and the arm was wrapped up again. Under better conditions, it should heal up soon. The same can't be said for the sleeve however, so he decides to put the jacket up. While putting his things away, he noticed an odd sight out the window and looks. "Smoke?" he asked. Thinking it was an attack, he got his vial pack, dagger, and a few other things back on before he left the room. "I'll be right back, there's something I got to check first," Colin said to his grandfather and left the shop. "Everything's in the other room!" he yelled after hearing something before he ran to where he saw the smoke.

He arrived just in time to see the Aquarian dragons trying to put out the fires while the guards questioned the public what happened. He heard of this building some time ago being run by a group called ADR that tries to create coexistent between humans and dragons. He thought they're the kind of people he could respect, but he avoided them because of potential problems it could bring to him and his grandfather. He saw an armored dragon absorbed all the flames, leaving smoke. Noticing he could see a little better, he got out his binoculars and started searching through the windows, noting that another group of humans are behind the attack. Even without the fire, other things made it difficult to see what's going on inside the building. Colin finally saw an event going on around the middle floor. Two people are attacking each other while a third watches what happening. Colin yelled while watching

closely, "Something's happening on one of the upper floors! There's three people there and two of them are fighting!" A sudden thought came to him as to why he's getting himself involved. He doesn't know these people and even before the creation of Windfall, he was avoiding them ever since he heard about them, despite his wants.

Colin got his binoculars back with a word of thanks. He didn't make a response since the blonde woman already left to see the situation. Things seem to be calming down now and though he didn't do much, he did learn what happened and it just screams idiotic. "People attacking other people... and it's this group. Obviously, they want their old lives back." He lets out a breath of air in annoyance as he walks back to the market area. "And just how is the old world any better? It's always the same stupid shit with them, especially that arena..." He slowly started to reminiscence bits and pieces of the day when the dragon outbreak occurred as he got to the alchemy shop where he will run the counter.

((**Note:** This is a flashback that takes place during [chapter 1](#).)

"We're sorry. The number you are trying to reach isn't available at this time. Please try again." The phone was suddenly hanged up before the voice could finish speaking.

"Stupid automated message," Colin said before he exited the phone booth. He walked pass a posting that says the latest news, the most recent one being some kind of dragon coliseum, where people could watch dragons fight each other to the death. The post itself is irritating enough, but the fact that people were talking about it eagerly crossed the line. He heard a familiar barking sound and looked down to see a dog of a golden retriever breed wagging its tail. "Hey pup," the man greeted, getting down to pet the dog. "You're looking well." He grabbed the bag he had with him and handed it to the dog. "Sorry, I can't stay long. Grandpa needs me. Here." The dog grabbed the bag with its mouth and runs off. As he watched the dog, Colin had another irritating thought. *'People know about a fight between animals, they do something about it. But they encourage fights between dragons. Hypocrites.'*

Colin waits for the Go sign to appear before he could cross the street. He figured at this pace, it's going to be at least another half hour before he could get to where he's needed. He heard a sound, but didn't stop until something rushed pass his head and hit a wall. Could have instead been him if he had taken a step faster. "Hey, I said watch out. Didn't you hear me?" The man looks to his left and saw a group of teenagers in their mid-years looking at him from the other side of the street.

The ball that could have hit him was bouncing back to the other side. *'Course not. I can't hear from that side,'* the man thought, annoyed before he moves on. *'They shouldn't even be playing there; they could break the-'* He suddenly lost his balance and fell to the ground. The ground rumbles, causing buildings to

shake and a few to actually start collapsing. One such building was on his way to collapsing on Colin. He realized what's about to happen and moves out of the way. He slowly stood up and wondered what just happened. "What in the... Was that an earthquake?" Shortly, he heard deafening roars all over the place, though he only covered his right ear. He translated those as dragon roars. There was silence for a short time and then before he knew it, dragons were pouring mainly out of the area that was supposedly past the coliseum. The sight was amazing, but at the same time frightening. He knew what was going on; this is a dragon outbreak. '*Grandpa...*' The thought alone was enough for him to start running. Everything was falling apart. In a short amount of time, dragons were all over the city, laying waste to the buildings and the captors that have held the creatures for so long. Anyone attempting to stop the dragons would find out that all of their guns and electrical weapons stopped working only a few second before they would die by the dragons. It still didn't stop Colin from trying to reach the place he's looking for. When he got there, the building was still standing; but from the fires, it wouldn't be long before it goes down as well. Forcing the entrance open, he called out. "Grandpa, are you in here?!"

"Quiet down!" The young man could tell who he's looking for is in the other room and heads there.

"Grandpa, we got to get out of here."

The old man stubbornly said, "We are not leaving everything behind!"

"There's a dragon outbreak happening right now! They'll burn this place to the ground if we don't go!"

"Then go! I'm not leaving behind everything we worked so hard to gain." Colin lets out a breath of air. True, everything inside the alchemist store made it so the two of them can get by and eventually, the grandson would have to be the one to manage it and his current skills are limited. He realized that if he did go, there would be nothing left for him to do. With that in mind, he started helping his grandparent pack as much as he can through vial belts, two boxes, and packs.

Money, vials, herbs, the two put in as much as they possibly can. Colin said, "That's all I can carry."

The old man nodded gratefully and said, "Thank you."

"Well, you're right." The two left the shop and tried making their way through the city, trying to find either a way out of the city or a place to lay low. The two heard a roar not far away. Colin looked up and saw a large white dragoness having her eyes set on them. "Run!" he yelled as the dragoness descends upon them and gave chase. While running, they got to the entrance to an alleyway with gratings and with the other side clear, they could escape through there.

The grandfather cried, "This way!" Colin thought about his grandparent's suggestion as the entrance opened. Suddenly, he shoved the alchemist inside, nearly making him lose his balance and closed the entrance. "Colin, what are you doing?!" the old man asked, wondering about his grandson's intent.

The grandson yelled, "Just go! Get out of here!" Then he ran from the dragoness chasing only him now. He heard his grandfather called after him. The young man hid next to a dumpster and barely escaped the dragoness's sight. But it left him with a gash on his back as he winced and the pack he was carrying was now emptied of most of what was in there. '*Great,*' Colin thought. His hand was on a part of his back and he moves his hand to his front to see the blood. '*Just... great...*' He peered from the dumpster to see the dragoness was still looking for him. She was doing a noisy and messy job at it. The man went back into hiding and let out a breath of air, realizing the chase is not gonna stop until one of them goes. He took his dagger out of the sheath and set his pack to the ground. '*Not everything could've fallen off,*' He thought, checking the inside and the other pockets. He found a vial with a purple liquid. He recalled it being something he picked up while packing and that it should be used when something like this happens.

Hearing the continuous roar getting closer, Colin knew he had to move. As he took the first step, the ground rumbled and caused him to lose his grip on the vial, causing it to bounce away. He cursed as he went after it, getting in the dragoness's sight. As she went after him, he stomped on the vial, breaking it and coated the dagger with what he could. He turned around, seeing the dragoness getting closer and waited for the right moment. When she arrived, he threw the dagger. All he could do now was move away. After a while, she started to slow down and eventually collapsed. Colin fell back shortly afterward, trying to catch his breath and deal with the pain. A few seconds later, there was a sound, making the man look to see something oval-shaped several feet in front of the dragoness. Puzzled, he crawled over to see what it was. It was cracked, but removable, so he took the pieces off to find a surprising sight. The cry makes it clear as well; he just orphaned a child.

Colin heard a growl from the dragoness, no doubt that she heard the hatchling. He guessed that she wanted to see the child, but it started to bother him. The hatchling hasn't seen the parent yet; he could prevent the baby dragon from seeing a scarring image, but that would prevent the mother from seeing her baby. Shaking his head, Colin took the egg containing the hatchling and ran off. He heard the dragoness roaring in desperation, but he didn't turn back. Eventually, the injury on his back took its toll and he started slowing down. Gasping for breath, he found a building that was still standing despite the damage it took. He went inside and shortly collapsed afterwards with one hand on the floor. He set the egg beside him and went lying on the ground, eyes feeling heavy. He finally closed it, thinking this was it for him.

((**Note:** The flashback continues into [chapter 4](#).)

The crying sound fills the room inside the building, waking Colin up. He recognized where he's at and was more confused than before. He asked himself, "Why am I still here?" He touched his back to feel no pain at all. Not even the injury was there. The crying made him remember the newborn out of the egg and he crawls over to it. Its scales were white, meaning only one thing. The hatchling was a white

dragon, a breed with the most powerful healing magic in the world. The man wrapped his hands around it as he tries to stop the crying. When it finally stopped, he carries it in his arms as he decides to look around the place. He found out it was a weapon shop selling medieval gear. He took a sheathed lance with a structure similar to a long sword and all the money out of the cash register. *'I don't like stealing, but I don't think it matters at this point.'* Arriving at the door, he braced himself for anything and opens it. The city was in ruins, sunlight probably being the only positive thing to happen here. *'When I said I want the dragons to be free, I didn't mean this.'* After the thought, he looks at the sniffing hatchling and spoke, "Well, let's see what we can find for you." He started walking through the ruined city.

((**Note:** Now we're back to the present. The following sections take place during [chapter 14](#).)

Business has been going well so far. People have been coming and going; either buying, window shopping, asking questions, or anything that kept Colin busy as he ran the counter while his grandpa is in the other room. On several occasions, people stopped coming. This gave him time to catch up on inventory of what was sold so far so that the place can restock. When that was done until the next customer, he went over his spell book to learn what he's interested in, sometimes practicing it while keeping it to a minimum. It seemed like the other days with a lot of differences.

The trees starting moving into the plant dragon's clearing one by one, slowly turning the area the same as the rest of the forest. The process took some time, but in his mind, this land brims with life once again and that pleases him. Now a thought occurred on how he should reward himself for finishing his own work. It should be something simple, yet satisfying. Then he saw the stream and recalls a river not too far from here. He realized he hasn't bathe since the day of freedom and using the ground as camouflage wasn't helping either. Choosing relaxation as the reward, he took his time making his way through the forest. Arriving at the river, he placed his claws in the water, noting how cold yet tolerable it is. Seeing no humans around, he slipped into the water and started cleaning his scales of dirt and mud among other things.

The plant dragon had several things in mind, mainly about what to do after he's done cleaning up. He wanted to regrow plant life, but human influence makes it difficult. Recent events have shown him that. He remembered in a telepathic communication that there is a place west of here that could provide him with what he needs. It's either there or head south toward a coast that would take him to Solomos, where a group of dragons that had passed by him are going. Having no idea on which would be the best option, he decided to ask the other dragons once he has enough food to carry him for the future trip. He heads back into the forest to find food. Being an herbivore, the green dragon filled himself with edible plants, such as leaves or fruits. Sometime later, he finally has what he needs for the trip and starts taking the path that will lead him out of the forest. As he does, he opens a telepathic communication to talk to

the other dragons. *'Hello? Can anyone tell me the best place for a plant dragon to go to? I thought about going south to Solomos, but I heard they're full of trees in the northwest region.'*

The only one to answer was a dragoness who projected back, *'I don't know anything about the northwest region, but I'm heading to Solomos and I'm sure it'll be plenty safe there. I wouldn't mind a traveling companion if you don't mind walking the whole way.'*

The green dragon was content with response, though it wasn't exactly the best, considering the condition laid out for him. The idea of walking would leave them exposed to attackers the entire way, though being alone makes the risk greater. Although flight can make the trip faster, it takes more energy. While walking may seem slow and takes less energy. He decided to go with the one who made the response, wondering if this one needs the help instead. He responded back, *'It's risky, but I can do that. Where do you want to meet?'*

'Let's meet at the south gate of Windfall,' the dragoness stated. *'My name is Katherine by the way.'*

"Windfall..." the dragon muttered to himself as he exited the forest. He avoided the place mainly because he was a slave there until a few days ago. He heard the city has been rebuilt under different conditions, but that didn't change his mind, especially after what happened not too long ago. He felt wary about the place of meeting, but it's an easy place to find. And if what he heard is right, there are dragon guards in case something happens. With that, he made his way to the south end of Windfall. Eventually, he got to the south entrance and spotted a magi dragoness smaller in size. This was starting to support his previous guess. "Katherine?"

The magi looked up at him and stated confidentially, "Yes, I'm Katherine. I take it you're the dragon I spoke to earlier."

Maybe it was the sudden appearance, but the plant dragon noticed that Katherine seemed uneasy even when she spoke. He didn't question it and instead responded to her guess. "I am."

She launched into explanation, "I... I know it's a lot of trouble to walk all the way to Solomos, but I can't fly very far, even for a dragon my size."

The plant dragon glanced at her wings, wondering what the condition is, before looking back to her. He asked, "Why can't you fly? The road is dangerous and walking the entire way could make anyone an easy target for attackers. Word has been around that some have died." Was it a warning saying not to go? He wasn't sure, only that out there, anything can happen at any moment.

Katherine explained, "It's mostly because I'm pretty weak, but not having a lot of experience doesn't help either. At best I could fly from the city center to the nearby river in one go."

The dragon said, "It sounds like you should practice when you have the chance."

The magi conceded, "I suppose I could practice on the way."

"Good. That way in case something happens and you need to run, you'll be ready."

Katherine answered somewhat absentmindedly, "It's more the people than the land that I'm worried about. But I guess that's just one of the risks."

"That's why you should be ready." He thought about these words, remembering that he didn't have a lot of offensive abilities himself. Throughout the years, he was only creating things or clearing areas, so he mostly knew restorative properties and how to move things. He only overcame his slavers because their weapons stopped working.

She smiled and started down the road, "Anyway you aren't wrong, the road is dangerous I won't hold it against you if you decide to travel on your own." The comment about how dangerous the road felt like an implication to something insulting, and thus irked him somewhat, but he decided not to respond to that. Katherine added while starting to show some actual confidence, "But if you feel like coming, I can assure you that we won't get lost. I didn't spend two days studying maps for nothing."

The plant thought about not getting lost as he started to catch up to her. "I know it's south of here until you reach the coast, though that's about it. So yes, clear directions would help, since I barely know anything beyond the old human city."

Katherine mused, still leading the way through the forest, "Well, we'll be following mostly old roads since new paths haven't been recorded yet. My owners traveled a lot, so I've seen quite a bit outside this city. But there's no telling what we will see out there now with the Spell in effect."

The dragon fumed somewhat in thought about the word about new roads and had no idea of what lies beyond. "The land shouldn't have changed too much. The Spell did cause the ground to rumble, but nothing catastrophic to the land itself... At least as far as I know. If we're using this old road from your maps, things should be fine... How old were those maps?"

The magi explained, "Not that old. They could technically be considered current since the Spell was just a few days ago. They're just a little indirect since I was using human roadmaps. I've already planned out some shortcuts since some of those roads go quite a ways out of the way."

The dragon lets out a breath of air. "Then at least there's a backup in case something's off about the road."

He looks around the forest, noting some of the trees that have fallen until he was asked by Katherine, "So are you out seeking a new home then?"

The dragon answered, "Yes, I heard other dragons are making a village in Solomos. Getting there would be a good start for a new home."

"A village for dragons, eh? I wonder if my family will be there. We should also be sure to keep an eye out for nice places on the way back to Solomos. You might find a place you like here," Katherine said, ducking under some low hanging branches.

The plant went around the trees since the branches are too low to go over or under. "Family... You have relatives you stay in contact with?"

She added, "I was thinking that since it's already late, we should rest when we reach the river. It should be just a little bit farther. If that's okay with you. I can go longer, I just thought it best to save the traveling for the day."

He thought about the suggestion to rest near the river. "That's fine. My only problem is how safe we will be throughout the night. There are plenty of plants for me to use right now."

Katherine reassured him, "The river stops right at the forest. There's barely a stretch of grass to separate the two, so we should be okay. And I don't really keep in touch with them. Solomos is just the last place I saw my family. I'm really just hoping they're still alive, besides Solomos is where I was originally born. I've wanted to go home for many years now."

The plant said, "I see. Being too far would put a strain on anyone who tries to keep in touch."

The dragoness explained, "Yeah, and that's why I'm going back to Solomos. To make sure they're all okay." Soon, the sound of flowing water reached their ears. The magi proclaimed, "I do believe we are here." She stepped out of the tree line onto a thin stretch of grass. The plant dragon observed his surroundings, noting areas to make use of for whatever happens. Willows hung over the river shading the entire area. What little light from the moon that did shine through glittered on the surface of the water. He sits down after hearing the magi's question, "Just downstream should be a bridge and the start of the road we'll be following. So, what do you think? Settle down for the night or keep going and sleep during the days?"

The dragon explained, "If we sleep during the day, we'll need cover since we'll be in one place. I can use the ground to make us look like hills, but I don't know how you feel about the dirt and mud on you. I think sleeping during the night is a good option."

"We'll travel by day then," Kat replied, probably a bit more tersely than was necessary. As if a bit embarrassed by the sudden outburst, Katherine cleared her throat and offered a small apology, "Sorry. I just mean that there's no point in needlessly straining ourselves just to stay hidden." She was silent then looked a bit ashamed.

The dragon took his time getting settled for the night as he wasn't bothered by her response. "It's no trouble." Other than the dirt, there's also the part about moving while sleeping. A moving hill would be strange to anyone.

Katherine said to him, "Come to think of it, I don't know your name."

He paused at the personal comment before saying, "I don't have one." He figured he would get asked about it. "I was taken away before I hatched, so I never knew either of my parents. The slavers called me things like dragon, beast, monster..." he scoffed at the last bit. "No name."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know," the magi said in pity and was quiet again.

The plant shook his head in response. "I doubt I'm the only one who lives nameless and parentless. A thousand years of slavery, anyone could live like that their entire lives."

Then she suggested, "Let's give you a name. I can't just call you dragon and certainly not monster. I'm not great at this, but how about Emerald after the color of your scales?"

He thought about Katherine's suggestion and what she thought up. He didn't think much about names because he doesn't have one, but it's been long overdue. "That's... a little too direct, but I'll think about it."

"Okay then. But we'll need to think up a nickname at some point," Katherine stated matter-of-factly. "After all I can't go around calling you 'Big-Green-Dragon that's my traveling partner.' Right?" she said, looking for a nice spot in the woods. She found a clearing just large enough for her companion and motioned to it.

"I noticed," he said, following her until he did a double-take. "Wait a minute, nickname?" He figured that may have been a mistake in word, but still.

Katherine yawned a little and replied, "Yes a nickname. Gotta call you something, even if it's just temporary. But we'll figure one out tomorrow."

"How about sleeping here? I can take first watch... and that does mean I stay awake while you sleep right?" she asked, a little unsure if she had used the human phrase correctly.

The dragon observed the clearing they arrived in, while hearing the part about first watch. He recalled something about the old slavers mentioning watch, guard or shift. They have more definitions than they should. "Maybe." He picked a spot to settle in and looked at her. "I'll see you when it's my turn then?"

The magi answered warmly, "Yeah, you'll see me when it's your turn. I'll be sure to wake you. We should probably watch for a couple hours each before switching. So, I'll see you in two hours."

"Alright then," he said before resting his head on the ground. He watched the grass move against the wind. His gaze stopped at the flowers. *'Such a short life, yet they live it to the fullest.'* He closed his eyes while continuing the thought. *'In the long life...'*

It was closing time and Colin had everything in the shop put away for the next day. He got his weapons, pack, and jacket on despite the condition of the sleeve. Holding another pack carefully in his arms, he waits for his grandpa at the door. "Was there any trouble taking care of her?" the grandson asked as the alchemist heads to the door.

The old man replied, "A bit clumsy, but otherwise alright."

Colin felt movement from the pack and saw a little female hatchling peeping out of the pack. He covered her up and told her "No, you have to stay inside until we get home."

The alchemist asked him, "But what are you going to do when she gets bigger?"

Colin assured his grandpa, "That won't happen for a couple years. We'll be fine." The alchemist didn't respond to that and opens the door, leading the two outside. They decided to walk pass the city square before heading home. The young man noticed another incident going on, this time involving a mage criminal and a pursuing Aquarian. *'Geez, it's too much to ask for quietness.'*

The alchemist asked his grandson, "So, applesauce, is it?"

Colin's thought trailed off, "Yeah. Mom used to make them."