

((**Note:** This section takes place sometime before [chapter 24](#)..))

"Brian Montague Fycher," a deep voice echoed through the emptiness. "Traitor, heretic, murderer," the voice went on as Brian struggled against his restraints, still unable to see anything. He was a man of average height, his short hair and beard were dark brown in color, and his eyes are brown. If one were to take a close look at his eyes, they would see that his pupils were slit like a serpent's. His neck was riddled with scars, particularly on the left side. He wore a plaid shirt underneath a brown leather jacket, dark blue trousers and gray running shoes. All his clothing had red thread sewn into them in one place or another in the shape of runic symbols that he couldn't understand. "Time and time again, your recklessness has led to the pain and suffering of those around you. Even in prison, you cause more trouble than one cares to put up with..." Struggling proved useless, fear was turning into terror as the room grew noticeably colder and the voice grew increasingly loud as if emanating from just inches away. "...and so here you are, standing on hallowed ground. I wonder, just what kind of demons are you harboring within you. What sort of monstrosities would your death unleash?" Demons?! He'd never tampered with that sort of magic! Trying to speak was pointless, the gag upon his mouth made sure of that. He had to get out of here, immediately! "Which puts us at a very advantageous position..." Suddenly, Brian could hear movement in the room. It sounded like the sound of footsteps coupled with a strange chanting. The sounds drew nearer and nearer until finally he could feel two other people on either side of him. "You will never pose a threat to anyone ever again, nor will I allow whatever you brought into this world to leave your corrupted shell of flesh and bone." Suddenly, he felt a cold metallic object surround the midsection of his arms on both sides; the feeling began crawling down towards his wrist slowly. Panic was starting to settle in, but there was literally nothing Brian could do. He was locked down so tightly that he could barely even breathe. "For you will carry your prison with you. I hereby sentence you to life in exile, in the hopes that if ever you are slain, the festering menace corrupting your soul will serve a greater purpose and wither away our enemies instead." Feeling the cold metal finally reaching his wrists, Brian started to panic, desperately struggling to at least feel for his hands, when his restraints suddenly snapped off. He immediately reached to remove the rag over his eyes and opened his mouth.

((**Note:** This section takes place during [chapter 24](#)..))

"I'm not!" the man yelled, only to be met with the familiar sight of the same room he had always rented at the Double Barrel pub for the night. Brian had been having that recurring nightmare ever since it happened. Sighing deeply, he examined his arms once more, still hoping in vain that it was all just a dream and the shackles weren't there. But they were, always there, covering his wrists and reminding him how much he hated the inquisition for placing them there. Covering most of the distances between his wrist and elbow, these heavy metallic restraints look as if they are heavily constricting his arms, impeding the blood flow to his hands, evident by their pale coloration. The restraints themselves don't

look like they have any way to be removed. No latch, crack, or anything. The metallic shine they have oddly reminds most people of steel, though not quite. Aside from that, they are decorated with columns of nonsensical gibberish that not even their owner can understand. In addition, they look undamaged as if they had never been in contact with another physical object, ever. No grime, or dirt, or scratches; nothing.

The man's head pounded like a drum, vision blurred heavily and breathing ragged as if he had run a marathon. Brian cupped his forehead with both palms and gritted his teeth; this had to stop. The recurring nightmares would be the end of him otherwise. Looking at his hands, he glared angrily at his shackles; and for a moment, visualized the things he would have done to the one who put them on him. It was a reassuring thought and it did well on his headache, if anything, at least distracting him from it. With a groan, he stood up from his bed and proceeded to get dressed. There was no point in trying to fall asleep now, he figured. Shutting the door behind him, Brian descended down the stairs of the Double Barrel pub and shrugged his way past the crowds before leaving the building. The cool air and quiet mutters of the crowds outside were soothing, but the familiar hunger pains in his stomach made it quite clear that he had other pressing matters to attend to. Brian had long since deserted the pleasures of human food and fully relied on hunting and devouring freshly caught prey instead, so he headed towards the outskirts of town.

Slinking into a secluded spot away from the eyes of others, Brian took out his knife and brought it to his neck. He pressed the blade against the flesh and closed his eyes, focusing intently on what he was doing. When the blade ripped through the skin and exposed the flesh, the blood started gushing out and down the knife onto Brian's hand. Muttering some words under his breath, the human surrendered himself to the spell's effect, watching as he de-materialized into nothing more than a cloud of blood mist. The process was short however; for not two seconds after, where Brian once stood as a man, he was there as his all-too-familiar-to-him brute dragon form. As before, his neck is heavily scarred on the left side of the lower part of his dragon neck. His shackles still restrain his forelegs, extending two thirds of the way from where his claws meet his elbows. The same red thread can be seen sewn into his underbelly in the same circular runic patterns, though less visible due to the thickness of a brute dragon's scaly hide. Shuffling a little bit of dirt onto the knife he had dropped, Brian made a mental note of his location, so that he might change back when he was done with his hunt and retrieve his knife in the process. Cracking a few joints and adjusting to the sensation of his now much larger stature, he calmly walked out of his hidey hole and towards the woods, eager to hunt.

Something had caught Brian's attention. It looked like... it looked a lot like a white dragon and a brute dragoness, and he was sure he had caught glimpse of a pygmy, too. Then suddenly, a whole lot of them arrived as if out of nowhere. Keeping his distance, Brian merely observed, waiting to see if this might all go down south for some reason.

((**Note:** The following sections take place during [chapter 25](#).)

Scurrying through the dense overgrowth of the forest, Petey took a sharp detour from the usual short path to town and ended up at Windfall's edge, far enough from where his two new companions were. He double-checked on his new belongings and proceeded to examine the other unknown trinkets he had picked up along with the bag he had stolen. "Thermite, Chloroform, Nitroglycerine..." he listed out the chemicals contained within the various vials and bottles. He went on to list several kinds of acids and a few chemical compounds he was even unable to fully pronounce the names of. In addition to which, he found a small heavily reinforced metallic looking container labelled "DHCMV-4.1" "Huh, wonder what that's about..." And though he was curious, he knew better then to just open it.

Tucking the bottles and containers back into the bag, he turned his attention towards the map. While the text was scribbled on there as if someone had used their foot to write it with, he made a mental note of where the new lab site would be, and then ripped the map into shreds and buried it in a shallow pit. He didn't trust humans; they were inquisitive, nosy creatures among other much worse things that Petey was convinced of. Finally, he took out the folder full of sheets of paper, detailing the findings the crazed humans had made from their barbaric experimentation. Or at least, part of them. Most of it was dry, useless information explaining the reactions of various other test subjects to certain kinds of stimuli. Nothing about Petey though, so he gave up and put the papers back into the folder, deciding to look at the rest on another day.

Confused and somewhat annoyed, the little dragon let his mind wander for a moment and considered his options. On one paw, he had the prospect of keeping all the information to himself and dealing with the laboratory on his own, after he amassed enough skills and power, of course. On the other, he had the opportunity to do it immediately, but risk the outcome on the whims of those around him. One thing was for sure, he wanted to deal with this in any way he saw fit, but that human... that human Dosh and Jupiter were ready to just accept into their venture without considering the liabilities, well... "One way or another, I'll make sure it goes my way," he muttered under his nose. He had massacred one of them and demolished one building already, he knew he could do it again and go even further than that. These people had to pay for what they had done to him with the most painful, inhumane deaths his twisted little mind could conjure, and they would. He would stop at nothing until they did. Composing himself, Petey lifted his bag back upon his back and scurried towards town, heading towards the centre.

"So, so I see..." Dosh was taken aback when out of the blue; an entire pack's worth of dragons surrounded them with the human in question among the group. She was on one of them's back no less. This both perplexed and angered the white dragon somewhat. Why would any dragon lower themselves so far as to serve as a mere mount for something else, be that human or otherwise? The whole idea made him question just what sort of influence this human girl, this teenage human girl would have on them. And what an underwhelming sigh it was indeed.

The girl jumped off the magi dragon's back and asked, "Okay, what is it this time?"

Dosh asked them, "Who exactly are all of you? And Jupiter, we really shouldn't be bringing, I mean, well..." He wanted to say children, considering the girl's appearance. True, she looked armed, but the fact remained that she looked far too young to be even considered dangerous at first glance. Clearing his throat, he went on, "We didn't find any guards at the abandoned building, but I'd imagine the new spot will be fortified by lots of human guards, better armed and better equipped, especially after that fireball Petey caused. Even worse, considering what we saw in there, I wouldn't be surprised if they have some sort of giant monster or something guarding the perimeter. That's something worth mulling over, in my opinion." Dosh squinted slightly; it was hard for him to not be offensive when pointing something like this out.

The girl shrugged and said, "If you're inquiring that I'm just a child, then let me remind you that I have earned the trust of all these dragons and that I will do whatever it takes to keep them safe." She motioned to the other dragons, who nodded their heads in agreement. "If I can take care of these guys, then I can take care of myself." Then she introduced herself, "Oh, and I'm Sparks."

Scanning through the crowd of dragons and then stopping at the girl, Dosh arced an eyebrow and simply stated, "It's your head." Something drew the girl's attention as she turned towards the bushes. The white asked, "What are you looking at?" He took a few steps and stared intently at the bushes until Dosh saw something. He yelled at the distant observer, "Hey! Take a picture, it'll last longer!"

Grinning, Brian casually walked over and jested with Dosh, "I would, but your face would fry the camera."

The white retorted with the same childish tone, "It would, but for all the right reasons. You've got a face what only a mother could love."

The brute winked and stifled a laugh, "You know? You're right. Like your mother for example. She loved it, if you know what I mean."

Dosh rolled his eyes, "Very funny. Let's stop here before one of us says something unpleasant."

"Too right, ol'boy. How uncivil of us," Brian answered with the most forced snobby British accent he could imitate.

The white said, "Anyway, as I was saying before you dropped in, my name is Doshernark, Dosh for short." Dosh turned back towards the human girl and said, "I guess... It's nice to meet you."

"Sparks, right?" the male brute asked quaintly. He had overheard her tell them her name.

Sparks said, "Yup, I'm Sparks. And this is Jupiter." She motioned to the female brute standing next to

her, who dipped her head in greeting.

Brian introduced himself, "I was named Brian as a human. I suppose you can refer to me as such like this too."

Dosh arched both eyebrows and asked, "What now? A human?" What sort of tomfoolery was this?!

The girl shrugged and simply said, "Shifter."

The man-turned-dragon said, "Long story; not in the mood to talk of it. Would any of you care to join me for a hunt? I've not been long here though, so I don't know what the local fauna is. But I'm a wee bit peckish and I feel like sinking my teeth into something nice and tender. Raw, even. Perhaps, still struggling." After he spoke, a droplet of drool went down the left side of his mouth.

Dosh declined, "I'll pass, not into flesh, personally."

"No?" Brian looked around as most of them were just staring silently at him with nary an answer to be seen. "Pity..." he said, visually somewhat disappointed.

The white simply declared, "You go do your thing, I'm going back to town." Then he looked at Sparks and said, "Petey's the only one who knows where we're going and I'd imagine he's in town already." He then turned towards Jupiter and continued, "I don't know about you or your human friend here, but I've been on the road for days and haven't slept in quite a while. So excuse me, I'll be over by the town center. It's that building over there, the one with the tallest point amongst the rest." He pointed over towards where the towering central building could be seen in the distance.

"You do that..." Brian scoffed as he watched Dosh walk off.

Then looked back at Sparks, who shrugged and said, "Okay then..."

The brute dragon asked her, "Off on some heroic venture, are we? Who's this 'Petey' person and where are you folks going, if I might ask?" Brian needed to make a few connections around here; this much he was perfectly aware of, especially if it was with other dragons. After all, they provided the solace he so wanted for himself.

The girl turned to him and said, "Honestly, I don't know half of what's going on. All I know is that Petey, the little pygmy that was here earlier, is trying to stop scientists from starting a new lab. I just got dragged into this mess, thanks to Jupiter."

Jupiter rolled her eyes and let out an exaggerated sigh. "You're welcome," said the dragoness.

"So, just pull out," Brian stated plainly. The faint gurgling of his stomach reminded him of what he had

set out to get done. "Well, I'm off to catch something to eat," he added just as nonchalantly, unfolding his wings and taking off towards the deeper parts of the forest.

Wandering through the town until he reached the town center, Dosh took a moment to reflect on all that had happened and what he had been pulled into. He didn't very well agree with what those people were doing in that lab, but all the white wanted was to be in good company. Now he found himself sandwiched between a rock and a hard place with a pint-sized psycho breathing down his neck. Just thinking about it made his head hurt. If anything, he was hoping Petey would show up soon.

As driven as he may have become, exhaustion gets the better of anyone, including Petey himself. The little dragon didn't even need to think back on the last time he had slept; he could feel how distant that time was. And with the recent chaos further making things worse on his mental state, he would either nap or snap. Windfall offered nothing to help with this problem, but then that came as no surprise. A dragon's place is not in a human settlement, regardless of how diverse its population is. He headed for the town center, hoping to first get some information about augmenting his own abilities before looking for a place to stay and rest.