

((Note: The following sections take place during [Chapter 45](#).)

Eric stumbled through the woods, leaning heavily on his makeshift walking stick. He was a 20-year-old man at the height of 6 feet and 2 inches and had green-gray eyes. His short brown hair is light and messy and his body is slim, but powerful. He wore a long green tunic with gray pants made out of a heavy material and he was wearing sturdy worn-down boots. "Curse that bear," he muttered as he walked along. "If it wasn't for that stupid bear, I would be feasting right now instead of feeling like my stomach is eating my innards." He paused to check on his equipment and slowly took out his last bit of squirrel meat. Reluctantly, Eric began to eat it, worrying about where he would be able to find more food. "Most likely, all these dragons have hunted all of the animals around here into extinction." He chuckled to himself and then grimaced as his side flared up in pain. *'I haven't had a proper meal in at least a week.'* He thought to himself. *'If I don't get something into my stomach soon, I'm afraid I might not make it. But look on the bright side, Eric. At least you didn't get obliterated by that last dragon you saw. Just keep going and you'll find something.'* Suddenly, he looked up and was surprised to see he had cleared the forest. What excited him even more was a huge city only a short distance away. Eric smiled broadly and started to walk towards the city. *'Maybe my luck is improving after all.'*

Eric, as he walked to the city, spotted a black wyvern with blue flames on her wings & tail swooping down, disappearing as it dropped below the walls. A few moments later, it rose up again and flew towards the forest. Then a long-haired man on horseback rode through the gates in the direction that the dragoness had been traveling. Eric thought to himself, *'It seems like something is happening.'* Anxiously, he drew his bow and strung it. After drawing each of his arrows out of the quiver and inspecting them, he loosened the sheath holding his dagger. *'Better safe than sorry. Best to keep my weapons ready until I know what's going on.'* The man set a course for the gates, hoping that at last, he could be at rest.

Eric finally reached the gates of the massive city and paused to rest for a moment. *'A city this big should at least have a few look-outs. I wonder why they haven't noticed me yet.'* He began to pound on the door, yelling in his hoarse voice, "Anyone in there? Open the gates!" With no response from whoever might be in charge of the gates, Eric soon gave up on pounding on them. *'Might as well see what that rider is doing. He might let me in.'* Turning back, he started off in the direction the rider had gone, once again wincing and feeling the pain of his empty stomach. As he tracked the path of the rider, Eric mulled over his plan of action. *'Should I stay in the shadows and challenge him, or call from afar, or just walk right up to him?'* he muttered to himself. *'Might as well keep my bow out in case I need it quickly. I wonder if he has any food with him.'* Looking up, he suddenly bumped into the man he had been looking for and fell onto his back in shock. The rider had turned and drew a quarter of his sword from the sheath in a defensive motion. Eric ignored him as he also noticed the wyvern and stared at her with curious eyes. He randomly remarked, "I've never seen a dragon of your kind before."

After getting to know the rider and the wyverness for a bit, Eric struck a path back to the edge of the forest. He called back to Rick and Flamanti, saying, "Then I guess it's settled. I will meet you two at the edge of the forest." He disappeared from their view with his pet, a reddish-orange tomcat named Blaze, following closely behind. *'Let's hope that the city doesn't send out people to confront us.'* As he picked his way through the forest, he began to whistle a tune to himself, one that he had learned as a child. Walking through the woods, the man became lost in thought, automatically putting one foot in front of the other as his thoughts turned to other things. *'What a weird way to stumble upon civilization. This has been a strange day. Let's see how this plays out. These two are rather interesting.'* Glancing over to his side, he checked that Blaze was still following. "How you doing buddy?" Eric asked. The fire-colored cat looked up, letting out a weak meow. "I know, I'm tired as well. At least we're at the edge of the forest." As they stepped out into the large area between the city and the forest, he glanced at the city. *'No trouble from them yet. Better that it stays that way.'* Sitting down, he began to wait for Rick and Flamanti to reach him.

Pretty soon, they meet two new dragons: Raven and Rina, who apparently needed help getting themselves a home in the city of Windfall. But none of the three could do anything for them as Eric and Flamanti didn't live in Windfall and Rick was only there for two days. So the swordsman just decided to help the one person he can and that was Eric. The two men rode the horse on the way to Windfall. Suddenly, Rick brought his horse to a halt and turned around to listen to Flamanti's conversation with the other dragons. Twisting in the saddle, Eric watched as Flamanti interrogated the two dragons as to the whereabouts of the deer they had hunted. Flamanti appeared to be growing frustrated at the lack of a clear answer. Eric thought, *'It seems that large game is growing scarce around here, due to the large populace of dragons and humans. No wonder I couldn't find anything but scrawny little squirrels.'* After listening to the rest of the conversation, it ended up with Raven warning everyone not to get on Rina's bad side. Eric declared, "You'll get no trouble from me. Thank you for the warning, though. I'll make sure to be cautious around her." Then he turned to Rick and suggested, "Well, might as well be on our way." The swordsman snapped the reins and the horse began to gallop again towards the city. *'If we dally any longer, Blaze is going to get irritated. The little guy never could stand being in the compartment, even when it's necessary.'* Eric restlessly shifted in the saddle, eager to see the city.

((**Note:** This section takes place during [Chapter 46](#).)

As Rick led his horse through the looming gates, Eric became assaulted by numerous scents and sounds. The sprawling metropolis bustled with energy and people went about their business. Peddlers pushed carts along the road, advertising their exotic goods. One came up to Eric, gesturing at what seemed to be a fruit. "No thank you," Eric stated, shooing the man away. Buildings clashed with large stately buildings giving way to small establishments. Passing one, Eric's nose was overwhelmed with the smell

of baked goods. *'How long has it been since I had a properly-baked loaf of bread? How long has it been since I've eaten something other than badly cooked meat, berries, and mushrooms?'* Flamanti followed the two men, walking along the road and giving anyone who stared at her a glare. Gazing down the long cobbled road, Eric surveyed the vast amount of people strolling through the streets. Looking at the back of Rick's head, the mage asked, "How many people live here? This place is gigantic! And how do you feed them all?"

Rick smirked and answered, "Cities like this have large markets where people buy and sell food as well as other goods. Merchants travel from far away to trade their goods." He brought the horse to a stop outside an inn.

Eric swung his leg over the horse and slid unto the ground. "Thank you for all the help, Rick," he stated. "It was nice meeting you." Turning to Flamanti, he nodded his head to her. "It was also a pleasure to meet you Flamanti. I wish both of you the best of luck. I believe you two will achieve great things together. Farewell." With a pivot of the heel, the young man entered the inn and disappeared behind the sturdy wooden door.

((**Note:** The rest of this story is not canon to the RP.))

The interior was unlike anything he had seen; it appeared to have a concrete floor and walls of the same material. Eric walked up to the reception area to get himself a room to stay at until he could find a landlord who would let him stay for either a cheaper price or for free. At the counter, he saw a male desk clerk, whose back was shown while he seemed to be doing something. Eric spoke, "Excuse me, sir. I would like to take a room for--" He looked at the desk clerk in surprise when the man turned around and revealed himself to resemble a long-lost childhood friend that Eric had not seen in years. The mage asked, "Charles? Is that you?"

Charles gave him a confused look as he asked, "Who are you and how do you know my name?"

The mage answered, "It's me, Eric. You know? The boy who was your best friend in school when we were kids?"

Upon recognizing him, Charles smiled happily and said, "Oh I remember now! Eric, long time no see! How have you been doing all these years, man?"

Eric replied, "I've been doing fine. I had to live in the woods after mom and dad died of sickness."

The desk clerk looked at him with pity and said, "Sorry to hear about that, man."

Eric said, "No worries. It's been five years ago since they've been gone. I've kinda gotten over that now." It had been devastating for him at first when he saw that his parents had died in their sleep. But then time gradually mended the wound in his heart and he learned to go move on with his life.

"Oh okay," responded Charles. "So how did you survive all this time out there? Hunting and eating animals?"

The mage nodded, confirming his friend's guess. He added, "Yes, that and I've been trading animal parts for food and stuff. I had to teach myself how to be a hunter. You know? To survive."

"Wow, you're like the Wild Man, the guy I watch on TV sometimes. I'd say you should have a show like that, too," said Charles as he smiled with amazement. Then he frowned and continued, "But unfortunately, the city's banning all entertainment electronics tonight. So no TV, computer, or video games."

"Well that's counterproductive," said Eric as he didn't like the idea of a law of robbing people of the everyday things they enjoyed. He can imagine a great many number of people arguing and rebelling against this kind of law. "I don't think anybody's going to be happy about that. That would be like taking away all my books from me." He can definitely live without electronics as he found most of his joy and leisure reading books, especially the non-fiction types that he could gain new knowledge from. The mage enjoyed learning new things about the world and everything in it.

"You're darn right about that," the desk clerk agreed, showing some disdain for the new law. "That new law is why we got this group here in the city called the Equalists. These guys are fed up with the way the dragons are changing our culture and reverting it back to the medieval age." His right hand curled into a fist and he placed it on the surface of the counter, without slamming it though. He continued, "And frankly, so am I. I'd like to give these guys an ounce of my support."

Seeing how his friend was mad about what's going on, Eric thought back to when Rick mentioned how dragons must watch themselves in the city. Perhaps the swordsman was talking about the most hateful of human beings attacking them with or without warning. The mage wondered if this change in the city's environment was the reason why the humans in Windfall couldn't stand their dragon neighbors. They must not like what the dragons are doing to their city or telling them what to do. Eric felt that the ban of electronics wasn't the only thing that angered the humans. There had to have been more changes that were contributing to the racism, given how Charles said that the humans' way of life was being altered. He wondered what they were, but he will find out later. For now, he asked, "So what do these Equalists do?" Eric wasn't racist against dragons and he fully supported their freedom from slavery, but he always kept quiet about this fact around racists as they were often prejudiced against dragon sympathizers as they were to dragons.

Charles answered, "Simple, they fight against dragons' oppressive rule over the city and bring back all the modern technology and structure they took from us. That's pretty awesome if you ask me. I'd like to

have all the good stuff back." Then when the door behind Eric was opened by another customer, the desk clerk ended the topic and went on to business as he said, "Anyway enough talk, I can't waste time when I have another customer like that lady who just came in. So buddy, how can I help you today?"

The mage told him, "I would like to have a room for three days please." Hopefully, that would be enough to find him a job and a house to live in.

Charles looked up the price for the reservation and used his calculator to round it up. Then he told him, "That will be sixty gold."

Eric took his wallet out of his backpack and opened it to get the money to pay. But to his disappointment, he found that he was completely broke. He had completely forgotten that he had spent the last of his gold on food supplies a little over two weeks ago. Now how was he going to get himself some food with the forest being scarce of prey? He looked back to his friend and shook his head, telling him, "I don't have any money."

Charles said, "Well, that's too bad. I can't let you stay in my inn if you don't have the cash." But then he glanced to the side in thought with his finger at his temple. "Although..." Looking back to the mage, he suggested, "I could let you stay, if you're willing to work for me and pay your debt. What do you say, pal? Want to work as my housekeeper?"

Eric blinked and repeated, "Housekeeper?" He wondered if he was going to be made to do all the chores in his friend's house.

The desk clerk explained, "Yeah, you know? Clean up the rooms in the inn, wash the towels and bedding. That kind of stuff." With an expecting look on his face, he asked, "Think you're up for it?"

Eric carefully thought about the position he was offered. He wondered how many rooms this inn had and how many other housekeepers were here to help him. He would hate to be the only one doing all that work. The mage can imagine himself getting tired after cleaning a great number of rooms. On the plus side, he knew how to wash fabric as he had many times washed his own clothes before. But he could only hope that towels and bedding washed in the same process. Perhaps there was a difference that he needed to learn. "Sure, I guess," he answered.

With a grateful grin, Charles said, "Good! I'll start you off by getting my sister to show you how things are doing around here." Then he asked, "You remember Kaitlyn, right?"

"Yes, I do," replied Eric. Kaitlyn is Charles's older sister by a couple of years. She always seemed to look after her brother and making sure that he stayed out of trouble.

"Good! See if you can find her at the break room, the laundry room or in one of the rooms she's tending to right now."

Taking up on his friend's suggestion, the mage replied, "Alright." Then he went on to search for Kaitlyn, while Charles was tending to the female customer who had been waiting to get her reservation. He went down the short hall and quickly found the break room, thanks to the sign that read exactly that. Through the open door, Eric could see the brunette woman reading some kind of women's magazine. The last time he had seen her, Kaitlyn had been a child, but now she looked beautiful. But he didn't have a crush on her or anything; he just simply thought that she was pretty good-looking. Going inside the room, Eric greeted her, "Hello Kaitlyn, remember me?"

The woman turned her eyes away from her magazine to look at the man before her. Her expression became one of surprise and joy as she appeared to recognize him. She beamed, "Heeyyy Eric! It's good to see you again!"

"Same here," grinned Eric. "I see your brother's running an inn now."

"The Lagoon Inn? Oh yes, he started this business six months ago and it's been going good for us since then."

The name of the inn sounded pretty ironic, considering that there was no lagoon anywhere to be found in this part of the city. But regardless, the man felt happy for Charles's success as he replied, "That's good for him. I hope his business stays great for a long time."

Kaitlyn nodded and said, "Me too, Eric." Then Blaze was heard meowing in complaint; he wanted to get out of the backpack right now. Kaitlyn looked at Eric strangely and asked, "Was that a cat I just heard?"

The man answered a bit awkwardly, "Uh yeah." He wondered if he had broken some rule about pets not being allowed here, if such a rule exists here. The woman would probably tell him to put the cat outside, but Eric didn't want his pet to be alone outside. He turned around some and patted the backpack his pet was in. He told her, "This is Blaze, my cat. I found him when I was traveling. He was weak and sick when I saw him, so I nursed him back to health. Poor guy probably had a tough time hunting critters to eat."

"Aww, the poor thing," Kaitlyn cooed in pity for the feline creature. "I'm so glad you saved his life, Eric. I bet he must be really grateful to you."

"I'm pretty sure he is," Eric replied. Blaze hadn't tried to get away from him since he started raising the cat, so he assumed that Blaze was content with him. Then he asked the woman a question he was concerned with, "Hey Kaitlyn, is there a "no pets allowed" rule here?"

Kaitlyn shook her head and answered with a smile, "Oh no, we don't ban pets. In fact, we have a room where people can keep their pets while they're in the inn. A playroom to allow them to play with the pets and spare cages if you need them."

"That's great," said Eric gladly. It was perfect for Blaze since the cat loves to move around in open spaces. "I'm sure Blaze would love to exercise his legs since he's been cooped up in the backpack for too long." Speaking of which, he needed to take Blaze to the playroom as soon he gets the woman to start teaching how to do his job.

"I'm sure he would," Kaitlyn agreed.

Blaze's meows started turning into hisses. The cat was getting fed up with not being freed. Not wanting to waste any more time, Eric told her, "Anyway, Charles wants me to work for him as a housekeeper in his hotel. I wanted a room, but I didn't have any money on me, so I had to work for him to pay it all off. He told me to come to you to teach me what to do."

"Oh he did, huh?" said Kaitlyn. "Well if you need to make up for the rent, then I'll be happy to get you started." Then she closed the magazine and stood up from her chair. "Come on, let's go pick out a room and learn."

The man replied, "Alright, but first." He glanced to his backpack and asked, "Can I leave Blaze in the playroom? He's getting kinda grouchy."

"Sure, I'll wait for you."

So Eric took his cat to the playroom and opened his backpack to take Blaze out and set him on the ceramic tile floor. He told the cat, "I'll be back, Blaze. Take care while I'm busy." Then he left the room to go start his job.