

((**Note:** This section takes place during [Chapter 23](#).)

Azera was annoyed with Juna and did not bother to climb the wall after her. Instead, he turned back around to see the brown-haired kid again with the swords taking money from a silver-haired boy in a golf cap. He simply rolled his eyes at the kid when he said "re-collect". "Stupid kid bounty hunter," the man said loud enough for the kid to hear him as he walked back through the crowd of people, closer to the two. "Greed over honor, what a joke," Azera said as he passed the two as look at the younger bounty hunter. "Not even worth the title, bounty hunter," the mercenary said to him as he headed for the exit of the town hall and continued back outside. Azera stopped in the shadows and turned to watch the kid with two swords and saw a tall mage with bluish-tinted white hair talking to him. *'What are you up to, kid? Trading your soul for more gold maybe?'* the mercenary thought as he watched closely from the safety of a distance. He did not want to cause a scene, but the kid piqued his interest. *'Maybe be a worth of a detour to see what the kid is capable of. But first a test to see if he could find me from here or even worth my time.'* He pulled his bow off his shoulder and notched an arrow. Its astral tip was carved to a piercing point as he attached a note written on it, "Come find me, kid. I want to see you're worth the swords you carry on your sides, or if your worth more or less. Keep the arrow for now; I'll come back for it later." Azera pulled the thick bow string back as he aimed carefully and released the arrow. It flew fast and true to its mark as the breeze brushed the side of the kid's cheek. It stuck to the wall next to him.

The bounty hunter buckled backwards, yelling a few profanities at the surprise. He looked around angrily as the antlered man stopped to see what the commotion was about. The boy muttered under his breath and looked at the arrow. He ripped the note off and quickly read it. The bounty hunter screamed nowhere in particular, "That is NOT THE WAY TO ASK FOR HELP!" He finished the note and shoved it into his pocket. He turned to the man and then outward again. He yelled again, "And do I look like a dog? Fetch your own damn arrow!" A few people stopped to stare at him and the boy began to move quickly along the stone path after the mage. The man stared at him curiously but turned to walk again. He led them out of Windfall, across the plain, and to the forest outside.

Azera laughed at the kid and said, "I guess not worth my time. But still wondering, where are you going?" He weaved his way through the city to his arrow and then out the gates. He could not see where they went, but he was good at tracking. He looked to the ground and saw footprints leading to the forest. He thought, *'Hmm, do I go after the dragon who stole my gold or the kid who peaked my interest? Hmm, I had very rarely found or saw someone to peak my interest, so after the kid it is.'* The man stood up from the ground and followed the tracks.

-----

((**Note:** The following sections take place during [Chapter 24](#).)

Kai looked back up and laughed, shrugging, "Looks like you've learned nothing." The guardian dragon moved its tail around, slicing away the magical attack to nothing. Kai's shadow seemed to buckle momentarily as another shadow moved away. The guardian dragon resumed its normal position. The younger necromancer made a fake yawn, "What a drag. Can you do ANYTHING without magic? I had some hope for you with the sword but...eh. Oh well." They shrugged, smiling at him smugly. "I'm waiting~" she called.

Spinx laughed and said, "You think that was meant to hurt you, but she will. And Kai, I would not want to piss this little drake off." He stepped aside from the drake as wind started to flow around the drake. The drake's bright white scales started to turn crimson as the earth scorched more under it. Its eyes focused on the dragon. Just like that, the drake was on a full scale attack at lightning speed and closed the gap in a second. The drake was on the other side of Kai's guardian as the scales' color started to slowly return back to their blue color, but still remained more red and white than anything. The drake was growling a very low pitch as it kept their eyes on its target.

Kai's guardian dragon spun around, letting its shield be the collision point for the drake's attack. It also again nullified the wind magic of it. The teen laughed, "Heh. Right. Everyone knows drakes are weak. They're barely considered something close to dragons. They have little or no ability to do any magic, and less so to simply even breathe fire. Pity you collect such weak things." Spinx took on a full dash and swung at Kai with extreme speed, making his blade dance in the wind. The blonde hunkered down and rolled behind him, coming back to their feet with a backward handspring. "See the difference between you and I is you may have some hulking strength, but I'm much leaner. Which means I can move faster," they said and winked. "Better use those twinkle toes. You ain't gonna move very fast with a sword," they chuckled. Kai reached into their pockets, drawing out a few bo shuriken between their fingers. They smiled again and seemed to wait for the man's next move.

Spinx turned on his heels and pointed his sword at Kai. "You think I did not know that, though this one is special, very special."

"Yeah, special in the head," Kai mocked with a laugh.

Spinx said as he readied himself, "And, her wind if I have to guess was just to close the gap, nothing else."

Kai snorted, "Close the gap all you want, it takes more than that pipsqueak to do any damage to a guardian dragon." The drake's head snaps towards them when it heard the word pipsqueak. The man caught a glimpse of the drake's eyes before his free hand shot into his coat and he removed the black cloak off his body with his hand full of vials. He threw all five vials into the air as he swung at the teen with his sword, but leaving himself wide open for an attack. The drake looked hard at the dragon and ran around the shield at lightning speed. She was under the giant dragon and suddenly, the wind spell was gone as her scales started to turn into a very light shade of crimson. She took her paw and went to slash at the right front leg of the dragon. The guardian dragon lumbered quickly out of the way of the

smaller drake. Kai moved back easily from the swing and noted, "Swing swing swing. Typical. Barbarian swinging a hunk of metal around. How quaint." They crouched down and sat on their haunches. Then they grinned for a bit.

Spinx heard the breaking sound of a vial he had thrown in the air as his free hand shot to a vial, that changed color during the time it was in the air from purple to green, and caught it. The other four went from purple to red. "Let see how well you fight when your lungs start to burn in a cloud of gas," he said as he drank the vial of green ooze. "The cloud is invisible and expands at a rapid rate. And without the little vial I just drunk, your lungs will start to burn." He smashed the vial in his hand, causing blood to come from his hand. "There is another way to get some time to breathe in this gas, but the fact is you and I don't have it." Spinx grinned at Kai and then looked at the drake. He told her, "Tris, get out of here before your lungs start to burn." The drake kind of stared at him for a split second before taking to the air and landing on a building. She almost looked as if she was on the edge of her nerves as if a bit worried.

Kai rose to their feet and backed against the wall of a building. "Again, an obvious mistake. That trick might work if we were in an enclosed space buddy-boy, but, oh yeah, we're in the open." They twirled their index finger in a circle. Their guardian dragon straightened his posture and started to pump his wings hard and fast. The size of his wings was enough to make a powerful wind, making the teen grab the window frame of the building to stop from falling over. They held their breath momentarily as the dragon presumably blew the gas cloud away into the sky. Once the immediate gas cloud was gone, the dragon settled back down, folding his wings down. Kai regained composure, edging along the side of the building until their back was to the open street again. The teen stared at the man expectantly again and muttered, "What a drag."

Spinx snapped his fingers together as Lord Tork came back up from the ground. The man sheathed his sword as chains appeared from the ground and wrapped around his arms as he pulled the end from the ground. They hang from his arm as the ends coiled around on the ground. "Swords are good for carving and slashing, but now, well you can guess," Spinx said as he started to make the chains dance on the ground. "Let's see if you can keep up now and see how the chains are not magic, your little pet won't stop them easily." Spinx devilishly said as he started to whip the chains through the air towards Kai's way at a speed that was faster than the blades' own speed.

The teen smirked, "Who says I need it to get around chains? Boy I've been doing that for years." Then they prodded, "But you, twinkle toes, must have an ego the size of this city. That or more emotionally unstable than a stereotypical woman. Because damn, I got under your skin laughably easy. I sure hope somebody isn't insecure about their manhood." Spinx closed the gap again on them, but this time, using the chains to sling himself faster toward them. Coming within close range, even closer than what he was using for his sword, he went to punch Kai straight, while whipping the chain from behind. Due to this though, he left himself more wide open for any attack than normal and he was grinning as if wanting a blow. "I'll take that as a yes. Or perhaps the insinuation is over your level of intellect." The teen laughed before continuing, "You changed weapons but..." They rolled out of the way of his chain. They rolled

into a crouched position and said, "Still the same hare-brained brute swinging his weapon around." Their guardian dragon returned to his idle state, sitting down and staring blankly ahead. Kai still gripped their needle-like shuriken.

Spinx suddenly tripped from the teen's leg sweep, but he never hit the ground, as he stood on his hands. He pushed himself in the air and landed on his feet. "Interesting. You could have used those needle weapons of yours on me, but instead you chose to trip me, very odd. Oh and as a good necromancer, you first judge and test someone's skills first, so if you have not noticed, I have all the information I need on you: your movement and strength. Great agility, yet lower strength with a different body build."

The teen explained, "Nah, the needles would render you a vegetable. And seeing as how I have no interest in your body or your soul, it would be a terrible waste of poison. Call it a way to peel an annoyance off my shoe if need be. But, judging by your lack of ability to hit me, I don't need them."

The man said, "And by the way, those insults don't really get you anywhere. And you're right I did change weapons to see what you were skilled at countering, so I say your little test ends there. And next time our paths cross, there will be no holding back on my part." He picked up his cloak and placed it back over him. He said, "That was really no fun, you really did not try to attack me, just try to wear me down. What a pain; and here I thought you would be more fun, oh well." He picked up his beer, finished it off and left, leaving the other beer. "I have a target that is more fun than you to chase, so later."

Kai made a short snort of laughter at his explanation, "Yeah sure. Oh what's that I hear? Oh, just excuses. I never tried in the first place. You're not even fun to toy with. Insults stick to you like glue, you're rather easy to flare up from how little goading it took to get you to react. Not only that, you don't even make fun comebacks. Jeez, at least that other little mage earlier could make a good argument." Their tongue was heard clicking before they snorted, "No, I wasn't trying to wear you down. That would be exerting effort. No, I was merely avoiding the annoyance you are. You try to pretend you know everything about me and you're 'testing' me but. Hah. You didn't even know my name a few minutes ago. You know nothing about me, twinkle toes. So why don't you go back to the slime hole you crawled out of." Then they added, "I have better use of my time than putting up with your petty dancing like you got something to prove."

-----

Juna ran for a bit closer to the sound of the festival sound, getting ever so close, until she picked up the scent of roasted marshmallows. She crept around for a bit until she came within sight of the mage and a kid near a fire. She did not know whether to go closer to the pair or stay in the shadows. She picked the second one for it was safer to her to keep her distance as she kept her eyes on the kid. She thought to herself, *'How strange, the kid has horns and fangs, yet he is not a dragon.'*

The brunette mage boy smirked as the orange hoodie-wearing boy devoured the s'more. The brunette teased, "The fire and chocolate activate the super-secret power hidden within the marshmallows." He

placed the gram crackers and chocolate down on a table nearby the fire for his eyes-narrowing companion before taking a seat near the fire himself. He stuck another sugary pillow onto his stick before holding it back over the fire. The horned boy scowled and stuck his tongue out briefly before digging a clawed hand into the bag for another marshmallow. "You try now," he said to the horned boy as the mage roasted the marshmallow. "Just try not to burn it to a crisp," he warned and grinned.

The horned boy snorted and asked smugly, "Why would I burn it?" He curled his fingers around the marshmallow and his hand burst to life with a bright electric flash. He opened his palm again to show a perfectly golden marshmallow. He explained, "Dion taught me about using my abilities in various ways to survive long ago. I liked the taste of cooked meat when I hunted game. So I used my electricity to barbecue things." He shoved the lone marshmallow into his mouth, the gooey substance sticking his teeth together like globs of glue.

The brunette stuck his tongue out at the whittette, "Yeah yeah yeah, show off." He went on taking his own marshmallow off the fire and making himself a s'more. The horned boy grabbed another marshmallow, squishing it rhythmically between his fingers. Taking a bite of the gooey treat, the mage lay back on the grass and looked up at the sky above. "Have you ever noticed how many more stars there are now?" he asked, shifting his eyes from the starry sky to the horned boy. "Or were you too far from the city to be affected by the light pollution?" Then he added, "Or did they not even let you out in the first place?"

The horned boy paused, "Hmm?... Oh... Well I always had a pretty clear view out in the woods. I never hung around Windfall even before the change. I couldn't fit in as a human with my horns and couldn't walk around freely as a dragon. I had to stay out in the forest..." He paused, looking up at the sky again. "Mmm... No I don't really remember much about the lab when it was still going. Dion took me out when I was really little. They would have rather disposed of me since it was apparent since early age I was a dud." He frowned, "But Dion had other hybrids to take care of as well so I can't say I...really know what parents are like. I never met my parents. Or at least I don't recall anything about them if I did. I couldn't even consistently live with Dion either since the higher ups visited him at home sometimes."

Juna listened from the shadows on the pair. She thought to herself, *'A hybrid, weird how he has not picked up my scent yet. I guess he can't smell my scent. I feel pity for him, but still not going near him.'* There was one problem that came to her mind; she could not go back the way she came. She thanked Azera for the cloak on her head as she pulled down the hood a bit more to cover her face and pulled the cloak tighter around her. She sucked in a bit of cold air and came from the shadows, walking towards the pair.

The mage continued to look up at the sky, wrapping a blade of grass around his index finger. He pointed out, "The past is in the past. Now we have each other, and that's kind of like family, isn't it?"

The hybrid shrugged and ate his marshmallow. "I don't really know... Maybe it was better I never met them. It seems it would be better to never meet them so I wouldn't have to know what it's like to have

parents. It would be more painful to lose them afterward, I think. I can't really miss them because well... I don't really have a concept of what it's like to have parents in the first place."

Then the mage shot up to a sitting position and quickly asked Juna, "Who are you and why are you in my backyard?" He must have heard her apparently. The hybrid just glared from his spot.

Juna looked at him for a second before answering, "Lost. I really don't have a clue of where I am." She sounded a bit nervous. "And I had no idea this was a yard, not use to there being borders among a city anymore; not after a certain event."

The hybrid growled briefly in annoyance. He snapped, "What are you blind? You get lost and the first thing you do is wander into people's homes?"

Juna's head kind of sunk a bit lower so her hood hid more of her face as the cloak hid her winds and her claws. She just wanted to know where she was at and which direction she needed to head. "By any chance does either of you two know how to get to Trident Mountain from here?"

The mage shrugged, "Never even heard of it before." He shifted his gaze to the hybrid and asked, "What about you, Akuma? Ever heard of this Trident Mountain?" Letting out a sigh, he looked around and picked up another piece of wood and threw it onto the fire.

Akuma ate another marshmallow and said, "We have a long set of mountains to the east, but they're not called the Trident Mountains. So sorry, your princess is in another castle." He pointed his nose in the air with his eyes shut as he grabbed for another marshmallow.

"I see." Juna looked to the ground a bit. Then she asked, "Well have any of you two seen or heard of a dragon by the name of Axle? He was to heading to Trident Mountain for some reason by father." She did wonder about her brother and if anyone had seen him, or heard of him. "Or maybe a man named Strider?"

The mage looked at her with his brown eyes narrowing slightly. Without taking his eyes off her, he asked the hybrid, "Isn't that the pair of miscreants that tried to drag you off not too long ago?"

Akuma put his hands up in front of him and nervously said, "No... I..."

The mage's voice dropped to a more dangerous tone as he spoke, "If they're who I think they are then they aren't welcome around here. They tried to drag off my pal Akuma a while back, and I don't take too kindly to people who try to hurt Akuma. Am I understood?" His eyes narrowed into hostile slits.

Juna's head shot up as she heard Akuma explain in depth, "I was by the river. I was...dying. A dragon attacked me and cut my throat open. Axle healed me and insisted I follow them. They showed me some human things in town and gave me some gold. Some nut case named Spinx came after them. They said

they had a bounty on their head. And evidently someone had thought I should have a bounty for hanging around them. So they fled town and tried to take me with them. But...I don't really think I'm in any more danger than I've been in at any other point in my life. As you heard from my experience at the river, things try to kill me with or without a bounty."

The halfling snarled, "Spinx... How I wish to rip out his guts for what he did to me and Shadow Wind. Him and that damn uncle of mine, along with their followers." Her hand gripped tighter against her cloak as she tried to hold down her anger. It was evident that the necromancer's name struck a nerve in Juna. It was unclear to even her, what she would do if she heard or even saw Spinx again.

Akuma frowned, "I don't know where Strider and Axle are now. So. Yeah. But..." He raised his nose. "There's...he was here tonight in Windfall. I can't smell him over the incense of the festival, but he's probably still at the bar down the road from the entrance gate. That's to the south." He pointed in that direction.

Juna looked to the place the hybrid pointed to. She looked back to him and said, "South, I will head north then, away from Spinx. Thank you for your help, you two, mostly to you." As the halfling turned and walked from the yard, a small black cat came from the shadows and meowed at her a bit before following her for some odd reason. The both of them left and vanished in the shadow heading north.

-----

The large room was empty except for the shadows and a hollow wind. Nothing was amiss inside this room, until a messenger's running was heard heading up the stairs. The young male burst into the room breathing hard. "Lo-rd.... Dracul...." the messenger said as he tried to catch his breath. His breathing started to slow, almost coming to a stop, when a large red tail landed next to him.

A deep voice echoed off the walls of the room, "You better have a good reason for waking me, worm. Now speak."

The messenger took a breath of air and keeled on one leg. He looked at the floor as he reported, "Lord, we have reports of a horde of dragons in Solomos. Also, we got the latest report from Spinx tonight. He has taken an image of the helper of Axle, which one of the teller dragons have identified as Atlas Firestar. She is a former slave and a champion gladiator, but it seems she has connections with the horde as well. After a bit of digging on some slave books and following back to where she came from, it turns out she is friends with the leader of the horde, according to one of his old master's friends."

The voice echoed again, "Hmm. Leave pest, before I squash you, and leave the report." The messenger got up without being told twice and ran straight out the door. Dracul picked up the image and report between his two fingers. He asked, "So what do you think, Arch? Worth a shot to get the horde to help us hunt Axle and even this Atlas person?"

Arch came from the shadow as he said, "It may be, lord. But where are we going get to them?" He was a gold dragon with scar across his eye.

Dracul simply laughed and said, "Teleportation to their camp; that is if you can feel this leader of the horde or the horde full present." Arch simply nod his head and found the present of a large group of dragons. The red dragon looked at the image and laughed, seeing how it included Axle in it as well. "Soon Axle, you will be history itself; you and your small party." The wind started to shift in the room and both dragons were gone.

The two ended up just outside the horde's sleeping place. Both the gold dragon and the red dragon stood there looking at the group. "So this is the horde. Kind of..." Arch did not finish the words as Dracul looked at him.

The red said in a harsh voice, "We are greatly outnumbered here. It would be wise not to say anything that would get us killed." He continued in a lightly calmer tone, "Let's go find this leader and see if he is willing to "help"."

-----

Axle lay uncomfortably against Mekarth's scales and the heat of his body. The man could not bear it anymore. He slid from under his brother's wing and staggered a bit on the cold ground, trying as hard as he could not to make noise. Axle went to the entrance and looked out the mouth of the cave, looking for a place better suited for sleeping. After all, he preferred the cooling wind than his brother's heat any day. He soon found one that was over by a ledge that was a bit away, but still close enough for him to still see the cave and for anyone to see him from the cave. Axle jumped from the ledge and shifted to his dragon form as he flew to the ledge and landed on it. He kind of patted around on it until he curled up and lay down on his tail on the ledge. He breathed in the cold air as he looked at the black sky and saw the stars and moon he was so fond of, almost as if they were watching over him. He smiled a bit before laying down on his tail and falling asleep.

Axle was at peace under the moon and the stars, until he smelled three dragons coming toward him. He was snapped from his sleep as two of the three dragons grabbed him from behind. The wind was knock out of him as chains appeared from the ground to wrap around his neck and legs, but that was it before the chains lost their grip on Axle. He changed forms to keep the chains off and slid from under the surprised dragons towards the edge of the ledge. Axle's arm was bleeding from him sliding across the ground escaping the chains and the dragons. Axle was breathing heavily as he heard a roar come from the cave that Atlas, Mekarth and the hatchlings were in. The man was about to jump in the air until he caught the scent of another dragon, one he knew was banished. Now he knew why these dragons attacked him. "Idiots, you're helping a once banished dragon and a dangerous dragon, Arch. Are you three insane?" Axle managed to say with him holding a snarl back as he saw Arch use a lighting spell at close range, which caught the man off guard. Axle screamed in pain as the spell shocked him, causing him to fall to his knees. His vision started to blur from the pain and the shock of the lighting.



-----

Azera lost track of the pair in the forest due to how dark the forest has become. He pulled his sword from its sheath as it started to emulate its golden glow a bit, giving him a small range to see with. He thought to himself, *'So much for tracking them and see what they are doing.'* Soon, he heard some words in the distance of people talking. He sheathed his sword and ran as quietly as he could to the chat. He came within sight of two figures. He grabbed a rock and threw it at a tree on the very far side of the pair, but still keeping himself hidden. *'Let see if it's the kid. If so, well maybe,'* Azera thought as he heard the rock hit some wood some feet away. Then the man heard a roar of a dragon very close by, almost sounding like it was in pain. Then a human scream soon followed, but he did not move from his spot as he kept on watching the kid and the mage, who both seem not to notice him at all. He just watched and waited for their next move. *'A cat stalking a mouse.'*

-----

Axle and Arch both attacked each other at the same time, both drawling blood from each other. But Arch infused his bite with lighting, causing the white to lose his bite on his foe. The gold took the advantage and shoved Axle over the edge. Arch soon followed and grabbed a hold on Axle's wings until he let go just enough to save himself from harm. He could hear the trees snap as Axle went through the forest below. Arch went down to see if the white was dead, but found no body of him. Yet he did see his blood. It looked as if Axle has slowed himself down just enough to survive, but not without some sort of wound. The gold looked around through the dark forest as he asked himself, "Now where did you go, Axle?"

Axle took no time on attacking him from the side of a blind spot as Arch roared in pain. The gold soon channeled lightning around his body, knocking the white off of him and onto the ground. Axle's scales were scorched by Arch's lighting attack. Arch looked at him and told, "No one is going to help you, Axle. Not after what you did to Crimsrion Drago."

Axle staggered a bit as he stood up and looked at Arch, saying, "Crimsrion Drago, he died for his honor. He laid down his life for his honor and he could not accept losing and thought it was dishonoring to himself and his family name." Blood came from his mouth as he started to pant hard. "Crimsrion, he was my dragon teacher and he's the one who taught me to fight as a dragon. His last words I will never forget when I asked him why. He said that if he was going to die, he was going to die with honor by one of his students and knew that student has surpassed his teaching." Axle still stared at Arch with his cat-like dragon eyes.

The gold started to have lightning dance across his body. He pounced on the white as he snarled, "You will pay for killing another dragon and I don't care why!" He bit down on Axle's neck. Lightning danced from the forest almost like a cosmic storm has just happened. The only thing that could be heard was a dragon's roar that sounded like pain. This light the dark sky up like a light bulb in a dark room and soon

faded into silence.

---

Juna saw the sky light up with a glow and then heard a dragon's roar that sound like pain. She knew who it was. *'Axle!'* She changed into her silver dragon form in the middle of whatever town it was and took to the skies in the direction of the glow that was now gone. *'Hang on,'* she thought as she pushed herself to the very limit to hopefully reach her brother in time.

---

Mekarth tried to hit Dracul, but was soon interrupted by chains that wrapped around him. The black struggled to get out of the chains as he started to feel a bit drowsy. The red dragon took full advantage on Mekarth. With one quick slash across the black's side combined with the red's darkness magic, he tore a part of Mekarth's side off. The black dragon started to black out. Dracul whispered harshly in his ear, "As punishment, you are banished from Shadow Wind, you and Axle. And if you come within 100 leagues, I will kill you." Mekarth passed out right after that and fell to the ground.

---

((**Note:** This section takes place during [Chapter 25](#).)

Juna came within sight of the cave where she heard the sound from. Due to so many dragons were around, she could not smell her brothers or anyone else she knew. She decided to take a shot in the dark and see if anyone knows if they have seen Axle or Mekarth. She landed in the cave behind the disaster dragon with a bit of a wind gust behind her. In a nice tone as she could without sounding worried, she asked, "Um, would anyone here happen to know two dragons by the names of Axle Incarus and Mekarth Incarus?"