

The M3 Bradleys and the AH-64 Apaches all had their weapons aimed at the injured Ronord, ready to shoot if he threatened to fight back with more of his magic. Hopefully, he would be smart not to attempt so least he risk the possibility of his own death. Lieutenant Tank Commander Hercules's SEP V3 came driving up closer to the dragon. He told the driver, "Okay boy, you can stop now." The SEP V3 parked itself about 50 feet away from Ronord. The tank's cannon still pointed right at him. Hercules picked up the communication device for speaking to people outside his tank. He told the dragon, "This is Lieutenant Tank Commander Hercules Flex of the United States Army."

Ronord heard a scratchy voice being addressed to him. He looked around for a human speaking him, but all he saw were the metal carriages around him. "What?" he murmured weakly. He was shocked when he realized that the voice might have come from inside one of them, most likely from that carriage that approached him. Even more surprising was the fact that this human was speaking the tongue of his species.

Hercules told, "You're up against the most powerful military in the world, boy! I'd say ya better stand down now unless you want to bite the bullet. And believe when I say we'll spare your life if you do."

Ronord just growled defiantly at the tank in front of him. He asked suspiciously, "Is that a threat?" The humans were probably lying about their offer. No, they would not spare him. They were here to conquer this island and make it another one of their territories.

Hercules answered, "It will be if you don't comply with our demands. We're here to take you back to our new base and keep you there until that king of yours arrives."

"Gregarious!" he murmured as alarm shot through the dragon's mind. He bared his teeth angrily and yelled, "In other words, you're going to hold me hostage and bait the king here for the kill!" He coughed a couple of times before spitting out blood.

"Hold your horses, boy! That ain't it! He's actually going to see you. We heard he sent he sent his tribe to find you and keep you from getting yourself killed."

'The tribe?! That fool!' Ronord cursed the king for not knowing the risk he had put his people without getting to learn that magic had returned.

The lieutenant tank commander continued, "We also joined in to help, but then you were going after the portal and we couldn't let you get it. So look where we are now, you shot like Swiss cheese and us with guns at ya."

Ronord clicked his teeth bitterly and growled, "Don't remind me." He was still salty about his humiliating defeat at the hands of these nearly hairless beings.

"So anyway, drop that vendetta against humanity, boy. We ain't at war with you; not anymore." Hercules admitted, "Well we were ordered by the government to kill some monsters here, but it turns out you things are sentient, so they just dropped the mission altogether."

The dragon narrowed his eyes and thought, *'So it is true, just like I thought. Typical, bloodthirsty fiends! Don't think I'll take your mercy seriously.'*

"So stand down, Mr. Ronord, and we'll take ya back to the base to have those bloody holes of yours treated. Either you face the music, or stay here and we'll let you die from blood loss. Your choice, boy!"

Ronord opened his mouth to spew an insult, but then realized that he was going to die if he did not get help that he needed. He had so many holes, all of them oozing blood, and he would not make it in a few hours. He did not have a choice, but he did not want the humans' help. He asked them, "I have a couple of questions I want answered. What did you do with Cyril and Ashley? And also, what about the dragon you all killed?! His name was Heaton!" He bared his teeth at them.

Then the sound of wings beating can be heard. Immediately, Luna was seen landing before the black dragon with Private Dylan riding on her back. She answered his questioned, "The humans killed him because he attacked. And not just that, but Cyril and Ashley are alive is because they didn't attack. They were in prison, yes. But the humans didn't kill them, because the government, I think that's what the humans call it, decided to spare us. They said that we will be considered as another country, because they thought us to be like people. I don't know how that works, but it's just what they said and the king allowed the humans to settle here."

Ronord snarled furiously, "That traitor! How could he allow this to happen?! This is-" He coughed and hacked painfully, but no blood came out this time.

The pink dragon reasoned, "Ronord, please! The humans are not like their ancestors; they've changed over the centuries. In fact, they're much more better than they were then. We even have dragon enthusiasts, which are humans who love dragons. Believe me, Ronord, when I say this...this human...Private Dylan was the one who help spared my life and...I-" She stopped speaking and looked at him with her face turning a cherry color like she was blushing. "I see it in him that he is a nice person to meet and I will never forget what he has done for me and the tribe." Dylan smiled back at her.

The black dragon still hated humanity, but he came to an understanding of the circumstances regarding Heaton and his own treatment by the humans right now. He stuttered out an answer, "I...I accept it and I'll...take any kind of punishment the king will give me." His head starts to get heavy again. "And I don't want to die like...this," these were the last words he said before he fell unconscious.

Luna and Dylan looked at him with worry as the former cried, "Ronord!"

Hercules issued an order to his soldiers, "Boys, put him on one of the strikers immediately." The soldiers got out of their tanks and lifted Ronord onto a striker. The platoon began to race back to the base to take the black dragon to the infirmary before it was too late. Hercules began to radio his report, "Commander Stevenson, this Hercules Flex. We finally got him! We're taking that crazy lizard, Ronord, back to base. Over!"

Stevenson was delighted to hear, "Excellent work, tank commander. I want you to bring him over to the prison compound immediately. Over!"

The tank commander frowned, "Uh...I'm going to have to turn down that order, sir. Over!"

"What do you mean?" asked the commander.

Hercules answered, "Well you see? We had to blow some holes into him to get him to calm down. So, he'll be better off laying down at the infirmary. Over!"

"Smart choice, Flex," Stevenson replied. "The king wouldn't want him dead before he got to meet him." Then he ordered, "Okay, send him over to the infirmary as soon as possible. I'll let the surgeons and doctors know they have a patient coming up. Over!"

"Roger that, sir. Over and out!" Then the communication line between them shut off.

After everyone was gone, Luna looked at Dylan and asked, "So I guess this is all over now?"

The private shook his head, answering, "No, not yet. We still need the king to sign the peace treaty."

"Peace treaty?" asked Luna. "Who will sign it with him?"

Dylan answered, "The president of the United States, Langston Herald; in other words, a leader of my country. I think he'll be coming here in like 2 weeks."

The delighted dragon asked, "Is he nice like you? If so, I want to meet him."

Dylan smiled at her, a bit amused by her eagerness, "We'll probably see him over at the base when he comes. I'll let you know when and where once I hear the details."

Luna nodded, "Okay, I'll be waiting to hear." Then she let him on her back and she flew back to the base.

Ronord's eyes opened to a strange scenery different from the woods, mountains and beaches he was used to. His vision was blurry for the moment as his eyes stung from the process of awakening. He found

himself looking at ivory fabric walls and what looked like beds. Another strange thing here was the rhythmic sounds of beeps coming from somewhere very close by him. It was a strange-looking device with a black surface that had glowing lines and shapes in different colors. The lines constantly moved in occurrence with the beeps, mountain-like waves, as he saw the numbers decrease and increase a bit every moment less than a second. Next to that, he saw what looks like a heart symbol besides the numbers. He thought, *'Is this...some sort of device watching my heartbeats?'* At least that is what he figured. He did not know anything about the humans' new technologies and their purposes, aside from their weapons. Then he saw some humans dressed in white outfits and light blue masks approaching him. His eyes scowled at them warily.

One of the humans, who was wearing eyeglasses, gestured him to calm down. "Hey, hey, relax. We're not here to hurt you."

"I know that, human!" Ronord growled at them. "I just don't want you doing anything that's going to wreck me for life." He will be watching their every move to make sure nothing malicious was going on.

The glasses-wearing human assured, "Hey trust us, we're doctors. We know what we're doing. We're just checking up on you to see how you feel after the surgery."

"Surgery?" asked the dragon. Then he demanded to know, "Just what did you beasts do to me?"

The doctors were insulted by the tone as the man snapped, despite trying to remain calm, "Nothing! We just took the bullets out, disinfected your wounds and then stitched them. Don't we get a thank you for that?"

Ronord growled dismissively, "Hmph! That thanks should come from King Gregarios. He's the one who wanted me alive. I'm getting out of here."

Just as the dragon was beginning to move to get off the bed, the other doctor cautioned, "I wouldn't do that, if I were you, sir."

"And why not?"

The younger doctor answered, "Well you see? We had you hooked up to an IV machine to raise your blood pressure after the damage you took from the gunshots. It's to keep your body working as always."

Ronord looked around for this IV machine and saw a different kind of device on the other side of his bed. It had rows of circles underneath the bright board. A tube was connected to it, which traced over to a bag of water hanging high on a hook. Another tube traced itself over to Ronord's foreleg, which had its end buried to him underneath a bandage wrap. He remarked, "You humans sure love coming up with different ways to do things." He was not praising them or anything, just simply pointing out this new culture of theirs.

The younger doctor proudly said, "What can I say? We're the most intelligent species ever!"

The dragon took these words as the man proclaiming his species being better than dragonkind. He growled, "And arrogant, too!"

The younger doctor looked hurt, felt guilty and apologized, "Hey, I meant no disrespect. I'm just telling it like it is."

Ronord was not going to stand for this insult. He vented his anger and pride, "You may have all these new doodads of yours to fight better with, but we dragons will eventually rise up to your level or, even better, above. We have our magic back now and once we learn more of its potential, we'll no longer be powerless under your might!" He will show these humans a thing or two someday. He refused to let his kind be seen as weak.

The younger doctor was spooked by his threat, but the glasses-wearing doctor looked unfazed and unimpressed. "Right..." the latter dragged the word in boredom as he nodded. "Like we should be afraid of a dragon with magical powers who lost to a bunch of tanks. Eh-heh! Nice try there, buddy. Wake me up when World War 3 has dragons in it."

The dragon felt insulted at the man not taking him seriously. He got ready to attempt a spell as he snarled, "That's it! Now you're going to-"

Then a sudden voice ordered, "Hold it right there, Ronord!" The dragon dropped his energy for the spell as he saw soldiers coming in with the leader in the middle leading them. The surrounding men were armed with their weapons to keep the dragon in line.

Ronord rolled his eyes at the predicament and thought, '*Not this again!*' He was too wounded to fight back and he was not strong enough to fight them yet. Though it made him look weak and embarrassing in front of the older doctor, he decided it was best to not rile these humans up.

Commander Stevenson told the dragon, "You better not try anything now, because you have a certain visitor who wants to see you."

The dragon asked, "Who? Who is it?"

"It's me," answered King Gregarios as he stepped inside. The soldiers moved aside to let him pass and meet the black dragon. The king looked none-too-pleased with his subject. He scolded, "Ronord, I am very disappointed in you! You deliberately disobeyed me and almost got yourself killed. What do you have to say for yourself?"

The black dragon held down his head in shame. "I'm sorry, your majesty. I only wanted to save the island."

"We all did, Ronord," Gregarios replied. "But you should have listened to my words. It is the law of this tribe to obey the king. And since you have gone against me and killed a few innocent humans, I will now sentence you to 3 years of confinement at home. I would have given you more, but the fact that you have suffered injuries makes this punishment enough."

The sentence stung Ronord hard; he could not see himself being trapped within the mountains for this long without going crazy. But he agreed to accept the punishment anyway. Through gritted teeth, he said, "I shall humbly accept my punishment, your majesty."

Then Stevenson jumped into the conversation, saying, "I hope you don't mind my opinion on this, King Gregarios. Sure, he may have acted rash and all, but it's a little harsh to treat him like that. In my country, we don't sentence people to prison for life anymore, unless it depends on the crime they have. But the point is I think he should at least spend some time around us to see what we're really like. And if he doesn't get used to us and he still thinks that we shouldn't be around, then maybe it's best to have his punishment."

"What?!" Ronord shouted, disliking the idea of being forced to like humans.

Everyone ignored the black dragon as the commander continued, "But it is not my decision to make, your majesty. So think and decide for yourself about this."

Gregarios considered the man's merciful rehabilitation idea. He was still angry with Ronord and he needed to do something about him, especially after everything he's done, including killing some humans, which the king had heard about upon coming to this base. For half a minute, he was indecisive about the black dragon's sentence until he eventually said, "Well, since you humans were the ones most affected and are asking to give this fool mercy, I suppose it would be fair to have Ronord forced to live amongst you for a while."

"Ronord!" they all heard. Then Dylan and Luna entered the infirmary. The latter asked the black dragon, "Ronord, how are you feeling?" They came to check up on him.

Ronord shut his eyes tight in disgrace, answering, "Like crap if you're talking about my emotions."

Gregarios scowled at him sternly, "And you should be!"

Stevenson frowned in disapproval at the black dragon, "If you think you're feeling bad enough now, wait until you hear the damage report about your attack and what this could mean for you." Ronord started to anticipate worse news from the commander.

Dylan curiously asked, "Damage report? How bad is it?"

Stevenson said, "I'm going over that now." He began to read the report on the tablet. "According to this, the damages were catastrophic and took a lot of our money out of it. Plus, you even killed more than fifteen soldiers and estimated damage that you have cost is 77,992,000 million dollars for our military equipment." Dylan did not like this news at all. That could mean that the government would have to raise taxes to replace the lost equipment.

Unfamiliar with the currency term, Ronord asked in confusion, "Dollars?"

Stevenson explained, "Let me be more specific in terms I think you'll understand. That is at least two nearly 3750 pounds of gold if you get my idea of how much this actually cost in pounds of gold itself."

The room went silent for a moment as Gregarios's mouth dropped open in shock. Even Luna was surprised as she said, "Gee, that sounds like a lot."

Ronord was also stupefied by the amount mentioned. He did not expect to cause that much damage. It was only like 7 carriages he had destroyed, but he did not imagine how much they actually cost in money. Were these things so expensive to make? He could not believe that they would have to pay all of that. The black dragon nervously apologized, "Oh my, uh...sorry."

The king gasps as he spoke out loud, "Goodness by the stars, is that how much he actually damaged?"

The commander answered, "It's not exactly the poundage, but it's my guess." Then he berated the black dragon, "You have destroyed millions of dollars of equipment and you haven't realized yourself that our government is pissed! They really want to imprison you for terrorism. And I know that is scary as s***, but the government is so pissed that we'll have to spend all of that again and recover the bodies to send back to their families. There were fifteen innocent men that died in those tanks and helicopters!"

Ronord sighed heavily, knowing that he was in very big trouble. Now he really wished he had chosen death instead. He mumbled, "I guess I suppose I'll have to take the consequences."

Stevenson nodded in approval as Gregarios said, "Okay, then it's settled. Now Ronord, you will be sentenced to live with the army for two weeks until we sign the peace treaty with these humans, am I clear?"

The black dragon shuddered in cringe and nodded, "Yes, your majesty."

The king continued, "One of the reasons why I'm giving you two weeks is because you're going to watch us do the peace treaty and then you're going to spend a year confined at the tribe's home. Do you understand me?" Ronord sighed and nodded in response. "Good, you better behave yourself here or else I'll give you your original sentence."

"I understand, my king," Ronord replied.

Their anger subsided, Gregarios said to Stevenson, "Now that this has been settled, I'll be taking my leave now. I'll be back for the day the peace treaty comes. I hope things go well until then."

The commander assured, "Don't worry about your highness, after everything that's been said here, I'm sure Ronord will stay in line. Anyway, you have a safe flight back home."

"I will, thank you," the king replied before he walked out the infirmary.

With his sentence beginning right now, Ronord asked, "So what happens now?"

Stevenson turned to him and answered, "Well since you're stuck here in the infirmary and Private Dylan, our little friend to dragons, is here, I think I should let him keep you company for a while until the doctors say you're good to go." He asked the private, "Dylan, can you handle it?"

Dylan agreed to do the task, "Yes, commander." At least with Luna here to help him, Ronord's enmity would be less severe and may help him better understand humans.

"Good, now have fun, you." Then Stevenson and his guards left the infirmary afterwards.

The glasses-wearing doctor smirked and spoke his words, which were seemingly directed at Ronord, "Well it's been funny watching the fireworks here." Then to Dylan, he said, "I hope you can handle him well, Private. I see he's very irritable. Anyway, I got to leave, too. Let me know if our scaly little patient needs anything."

The younger doctor said, "I'm going, too." The two doctors went out as well.

Now it was just Dylan, Luna and Ronord alone in the tent. The black dragon, having sensed the older doctor's scoffing attitude, thought bitterly, *'Stupid contemptuous human! If not for the king, I would have-'*

His thoughts were interrupted by Dylan asking, "So Ronord, how are you holding up?"

"I don't know," answered the black dragon, scowling at the IV machine. "Maybe if I wasn't confined to this bed, then I'd know for sure."

Then it was Luna's turn to ask her own question, "So is it really true that our magic has returned?"

Ronord answered, "Yes. The one who taught me those powers was a white dragon from another tribe."

"Yes, so we've heard," the pink dragon said.

The black dragon presumed, "So you've met Whitley, too."

"The white dragon?" Dylan asked. "Yes, we did. He told us where to find you and that's how we got to you."

Ronord would have told the private that he was not talking to him, but he was forced to play nice with the humans. "Tch," he just clicked his teeth in response, showing a bit of grumpiness. "That's him alright. He found where the magic was sealed and released it worldwide."

Luna smiled, unable to contain her excitement as she beamed, "Then that means we can use magic again!" She could not wait to do all sorts of magical things like making flowers grow, winds blow and changing colors of the things she sees.

"Yes, we can, Luna," Ronord replied.

The pink dragon asked, "Can you teach me?" She was eager to learn how to channel the energy for the spells, so that she could make some fun here.

"Sure," the black dragon answered. "All you have to do is feel for the energy within the earth and then cast out the spells you want from your front talons."

"Okay, I'll give it a try." Luna held the feet of her forelegs firmly on the grass beneath the tent. She began to channel up the nature's magic right into these limbs to store and use whenever she needed. Afterwards, she began to conjure a few translucent blue butterflies that fluttered about around them. The pink dragon smiled at her own illusory creations and asked, "Don't they look so pretty?"

Dylan was watching them with wonder. "They sure are," he answered. He tried to touch one of the butterflies with his finger, but it went through as if the creature itself was a hologram.

Luna beamed, "I can't wait to tell Ashley and the others about this! They're going to be so thrilled! Speaking of which, I think I'll go tell them now." She began to walk away and looked back at her friend to say, "I'll be back, Dylan!"

The private responded, "Okay, anytime!" Then the pink dragon went out to return back to the tribe. The man turned to the black dragon, saying, "Well, looks like it's just you and me, Ronord. Guess we can chat to pass the time."

"Chat about what?" asked Ronord grumpily.

"I don't know," said Dylan, trying to think of an interesting topic. "I guess we could talk about...um..." What would a dragon like Ronord be into?

The dragon got impatient. "What? What is it?"

"Like how those invisible walls keep you guys hidden?" In any other conversation, this would not be the first thing that Dylan would ask. It was just something he randomly brought up to keep the dragon from getting irritated at having to wait for the conversation to go.

Ronord answered, "That's a permanent spell our ancestors cast long ago to keep us hidden and protected from outsiders like yourselves just before we lost our magic."

"I figured." After having learned about the dragons' ability to do magic, the private came to the conclusion that they must have been the cause of that strange barrier. How else would they have been made?

"It was working so well for us until you humans came along right out of that portal." The dragon made a bitter frown.

"Well geez, sorry."

Ronord sighed, "If only Whitley had made his portal somewhere else." Then none of his tribe would have thrown their lives away.

The mention of Whitley had brought Dylan's mind to the white dragon. How long it has been since he's been to his tribe? The private wondered if the dragon ever wanted to go home. He would have to ask that later and maybe tell the commander that. Stevenson may be glad to hear that they would find more uncharted islands that were never discovered. Dylan asked, "So what did you think of Whitley when you heard that he was from another tribe?"

Ronord did not know what to say and he did not like talking to humans, even if he had to live with them for two weeks. But he still needs to get use to them for his own sake. He sighed and said, "I was surprised. I didn't know what to say when I saw him, but at least I'm glad that he brought our magic back to this world." And should any of the other tribes out there discover this fact as well, hopefully none would make the same woeful mistake of taking on humans one-against-many like he did.

Despite the dragon trying to hold back his animosity as much as he could, Dylan could tell by his looks and actions that Ronord did not like talking to a human. He understood the feeling and felt it was best not to be around such negativity. He decided to ask, "Do you want me to leave you alone for a while until you recover completely? Or you want me to stay and keep talking?"

"No," the dragon grumbled gruffly.

"I thought so," the private said. He turned for the exit and said, "Well, see you later I guess." Then he walked out the tent. Realizing he was going to be stuck here alone with nothing to do, Ronord was about to ask how long he would be in this bed, but the man was already gone. The dragon let out a frustrated sigh; now he was going to suffer boredom for who knows how long.

A couple of days had gone by since the incident with Ronord. The military had been pretty busy with manufacturing. Over a few dozen construction vehicles have been kicked into high gear and even the men were working as hard as they could. Their plan was to make a full all-out runway that was at least 8,600 feet long and 150 feet wide. This was so that President Herald's ride would have somewhere to land safely after a long flight here. It would also be suitable for having a secret base here, since they were going to keep this place secret from the rest of the world for a while. Because of these precautions, they would have to wait until it was okay to release the news about the island of dragons, which would be in about another three days. The date of the peace treaty was to be delayed due to the fact that it takes time to get the runway built. The president wanted to get there by plane, which is the Air Force One, but he accepted that it would take another week to make the runway as fast as possible. Besides, it would take a few days for the inspectors to check everything in the warehouses that held plane parts for storage, the runway, the hangar structures, the control tower, and other little things. They needed to make sure that everything was properly built, so that no structures would collapse and kill the people inside, especially the president.

The army was also lucky to find out that the grassy field goes all the way to the beach. Another good thing was that the water level was at two to three feet deep there. Most of the island was actually like that, except for some bays which were 40 to 50 feet deep. These bays were to be used as ports. The island itself was at least 80 miles long and 30 miles wide. It did not drop about 1,100 to 1,200 feet from the shore to where it got deeper in the water. This was good as this place could be used to put over a couple of a hundred beams into the sand of the water. This was used to keep the runway from using up more land space, but also to keep it at a suitable size for any military aircraft to land and takeoff. There would only be two of them just to support the massive American C-5 Galaxies, which were over 245 feet long. The place will also have a 12-story control tower, small overhead hangars for the jets & planes, a radar station, and some air defense systems.

As the construction went on, engineers and supervisors oversaw the working men to keep everything in order. There from a distance, many of the tribe dragons were watching the humans make that giant, long road that was more than a quarter way done. One of the dragons said, "Wow look at that big black road the humans are making!" It was half-amazing and half-confusing as to what they were exactly making. The humans were making it fast and the scouts said that they have been doing it all day and all night.

One of the female dragons, amazed by how the humans were creative in a way of making things so fast, responded, "Yes, but I wonder what it's for? I heard from some dragons that they think that it's for transport."

Some of the dragons were doubtful about that. "I don't think so," said another dragon from the crowd. "It's too big to be one, plus there's nothing it's connected to, except to these large round buildings they're making." It was odd of what they were making; some of the dragons could not go there on the ground, because for "safety reasons" by the humans. But it was clear that there were over six dozen carriages that were using these large buckets and strange walls on them to use to dig, push, and straighten out the ground.

A fourth dragon said, "Well whatever it is, we might as well wait until they're finished building the place to see the answer ourselves."

Another female suggested, "Or we could just go ask them ourselves."

"You don't need to," said a third female voice among them. Luna walked over to the crowd who turned their attention to her. She continued, "I already asked Dylan what's going on."

The second male asked, "And what did he say?"

Luna answered, "He said that they're building a military airport to house their big flying carriages called aircraft and they're making this road for these things to takeoff from and land whenever they need to."

The tribe did not understand the point of this long road as the same male questioned, "That's what this road is for? Why do they need that? Can't they just jump from the ground to get to the sky?"

"Because they're not like us dragons," Luna answered. She tried to recall what Dylan had told her about these things as she explained, "They have these wheels for feet and they...uh...what was it?.. Oh yeah! And they need to run on that road for a while before they go up this ramp they prepare, so that they can fly into the sky." The puzzled expressions were still there on the tribe's face, which the pink dragon could sympathize with. "Yes, I know it's all confusing, but that's how it is."

The third male requested, "Could you give us a magical projection of how exactly it works?" Perhaps seeing this process visually would better help them all understand.

"Sure," Luna said. She cast the spell to make a translucent blue hologram of a Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II and the runway for all to see. The stealth fighter jet drove itself across the runway as its engines blazed behind it. Then it reached the ramp, went up it and then flew into the air as it tucked in its wheels with the engine still burning. Then once it got high enough, the engine stopped burning and let the jet fly itself normally. Before now, she had checked with Dylan on how this process went as he gave her corrections on it actually went.

The first male dragon said, "Okay, I think I get it now. So how do they land?" Luna made the illusory jet take a U-turn and descend down to the runway as she made the ramp disappear, leaving the road completely flat. The wheels came out and then the jet landed on the runway, running for a bit as it gradually slowed down to a complete stop at the end.

Some of the dragons saw this type of carriage looked like the crosses of many creatures in one. It resembled a bird and perhaps a manta ray. They saw the aircraft with its many sharp edges on the nose and the rest of it with only one black burning hole that looked like to them was what made this thing able to fly. They also saw the wings were more in a way like steps when they saw it fly in the demonstration of it taking off and landing. One of the dragons asked, "And there are other ones like these, but they're different in sizes and such and all for certain purposes?"

Luna nodded and answered, "Yep!" It was not long before a loud roar was soon heard, which was coming right at them. The dragons turned and saw a real aircraft passing by with a thundering roar from its burning hole of hot flames. They saw it did many rolls, loops, and sharp turns at such speeds. The thing climbed in heights at such speeds that it looked like it was not losing one bit of momentum.

The dragons awed at it and soon, it disappeared to the east in minutes. A young dragon asked, "Where's it going?"

Luna was unsure of this herself, so she guessed, "I don't know. Maybe they're just doing a practice flight?"

A nurse entered the infirmary carrying a plate of meat to the bed. She took up one of the uncooked beef strips to hold as the meat dangled from her fingers. With a smile, she said, "Lunch is ready, open wide!" She fed the strip to the patient. Ronord opened his jaws and clamped down on the meat, grouchy chewing it. How humiliating, being fed by humans like he was some kind of pet or something. He should be outside hunting in the woods, not held down here. Just how long was he going to get cooped up here? After he had eating everything on the plate, the cheerful nurse took the empty plate with her out the tent to take back to the food tent.

Ronord snorted with contempt as he stared up at the ceiling. Soon, more visitors showed up in the forms of Dylan and his friend, Private Kurt. The brunette asked the dragon, "Hey Ronord, did you get your lunch yet?"

"Yes," the dragon answered flatly.

Dylan said, "I brought a friend with me. His name's Kurt and he's a friendly guy."

Kurt smiled at the dragon, greeting, "Hey there, how you doing? So you're Ronord, that one dragon who's being kept here with us? I hope being stuck in the infirmary isn't boring you or anything. I know how it feels not being able to do anything, or go anywhere for that matter."

"Tch!" Ronord rolled his eyes, snorting, "Don't remind me."

Dylan said to his friend, "Don't mind him, he's always has a cow when he's around humans."

"So I've heard," Kurt replied. Word had spread around the base about Ronord's short temper and bigotry, which he was infamous for. To the dragon, he sympathetically said, "Hey, sorry about all those dragons we killed."

Ronord growled at the light-haired brunette, "If you were really sorry, then you lot would get off of this island right now!" The glare he sent the two men was harsh as seen by his eyes. He continued through yelling, "Who are you to come to this place and settle here like it's a free turf to take?! This is OUR island! You stop with all this building nonsense and take your things elsewhere!"

"We can't," Kurt told him with an apologetic frown. "Your king and our president are going to have a treaty to ensure peace between us. Don't you want that?" The dragon let out a low growl in response. "Besides, your tribe doesn't seem to mind us being here. You're going to have to take it up with them if you want us out of here."

Ronord did not reply; he had a feeling the king's answer would be to let the humans stay if he ever brought up the issue with him. He thought bitterly, *'Is he really just going to forgive the humans for taking away all these lives?'* Sure, their preemptive strike caused the army to retaliate, but these dragons had mates, hatchlings and parents who cherished them. Where is the justice for the loved ones? Where is the justice for the dead? Does his tribe not care about that?

Dylan was tempted to lay a comforting hand on Ronord, but he decided against it when he figured the dragon would yell at him for the touch. "Listen Ronord, Kurt and I don't have the power to stop this, but we promise that everything's going to be alright here. The base is the only thing we're building here; nothing more than that."

The dragon grumbled, "That better be the case, human."

When no more word was spoken, Kurt thought to break up the silence by asking the dragon about his kind, "So Ronord, what's your tribe like? What do you guys do for a living? Any holidays you celebrate?" Perhaps this change in topic from humans to dragons would lighten him up.

"Why do you care?"

Kurt answered, "Well because Dylan's shared a lot with Luna about our things and everything. I figured it would be fair if we got to know about you dragons in return. You know? To help us understand one another."

"So that's it." Ronord began to accuse them, "You intentionally gave her your culture, so that you could learn our secrets! Is that it?!"

The light-haired brunette was taken aback as he held his hands up to the height of his shoulders and cried, "What? No! I was just asking about yours, that's all."

Dylan asserted sternly, "Ronord, there is no conspiracy to kill your tribe, if that's what you think. If we wanted you dead, we would have left you to die!"

The dragon snarled, "You only helped me because Luna was there. If you didn't heal me, then you would have lost her trust and the tribe's."

Dylan, now just as mad as the dragon is, argued, "Ronord, our army had beaten you two times." For emphasize, he added, "Easily!" He continued reasoning, "We could have easily destroyed your tribe in one day if we wanted to, but we didn't and we never will. So stop being paranoid and learn to be nice to humans, will you?!"

"Fine," Ronord snorted. He kept his harsh temper down to a bare minimum as he said to Kurt, "Alright fine, I'll answer your little questions." The dragon began to share with the privates everything he knew about his tribe.

Later that day, the new U.S. base was almost complete. Even then, it was still very busy as many men were trying to solve out some problems as some engineers and such were there to discuss the construction of the expansion of the base and the military airport. Some of the dragons were still there watching the humans. They wondered more about the humans, their technology and everything they do in their lifestyle. Some of the dragons had heard about some gigantic skyscrapers in other parts around the planet. They were completely amazed that there was a new skyscraper that was going to be built. This could mean when the dragons are able to be more trustworthy with the humans and humans more trustworthy with the dragons, then one day the dragons and humans would finally come at peace and work together.

A male dragon asked his tribe, "So does anybody know what this skyscraper is going to be like when they get done with it?"

The second male shrugged, "I don't know." He turned to Alex and asked, "How about you? Did you hear from the humans what they're making here exactly?"

Alex shook his head, answering, "Nope, I never did. Sorry. I can go ask them, if you want."

"Then do it," the second male told him. The blue dragon took flight and went to ask the humans about the skyscraper's purpose.

Alex went up to one of the humans and asked, "Hey, what kind of new skyscraper is going to be built."

The man answered, "It's a half-mile tall one and it's going to be completed in 2023. That's three years from now." Alex flew back to the other dragons told them that.

Ronord was now alone again in the infirmary. The rest of the interaction with Dylan and Kurt had gone fine when he was telling them his tribe's culture and afterwards. His dislike of humans was still there, but at least these two did not seem like bad guys. Though as sincere as they were, he had no doubt that they were one of the many soldiers who retaliated and killed some of the fighting males. He would not forgive them for this. Then the tent's flap opened and in came Ashley, an unusual and first-time visitor to this place. All his other visitors were the doctors, nurses and of course, Dylan and sometimes his friends. Ashley greeted, "Hey Ronord, I heard you got banished to live here."

"I did," the black dragon confirmed. He complained, "I can't believe I have to live here with these damn humans." His teeth gritted at the thought.

Ashley tried to cheer him up, "Hey now, they're not so bad once you get to know them. Yes, we were all uptight over them, but they turned out to be nice people."

Ronord looked her dead seriously in the eye and growled, "You! You and the rest of the tribe are so content to have these humans around. Did you forget that they killed our males the first time they set foot on this island?!" The teal dragon was startled by his sudden anger. "What? Do their lives mean nothing to you that you would all just mingle about with them like it's a damn party right on top of their graves?!"

Ashley, upset by his tone, tried to remain calm as she began to tell him, "Ronord please, I understand you're upset about that, but the humans were--"

"I know that!" the black dragon yelled, which made Ashley jerk back. He did not need to be told this over and over again. "But these were dragons we've known for a long time and now lost...forever. I had friends and brothers among them! We shouldn't be forgiving these killers so easily; justice needs to be served. What would the dead think of us, knowing that they'll never be avenged?"

Ashley frowned sadly, thinking about all the deceased dragons she will never see again. "Ronord, we're all still sad about them being dead. You have no idea what some of us are going through right now. I've seen hatchlings without fathers brooding and being withdrawn, and mothers still crying over their sons and mates. Some of us are still upset about this." Ronord was a bit thankful that at least someone shared his sentiment, though it did not show on his face. The teal dragon reasoned, "But I don't think revenge will solve this. Some of the humans would probably feel the same way you do if you killed their friends and they'll want you dead for that."

Ronord murmured, "I don't plan to kill them; not anymore. I just want some kind of reparation for this."

"Like what?"

"I don't know. Just something that will really make up for this."

Ashley advised, "You should probably to it up for discussion with the humans."

"I will." Ronord already had that planned out. He just needed to speak with the leader of this army, the one he knows as Commander Stevenson. '*Soon*,' he finished.

Yesterday when Gregarios came to visit the base, he had seen a soldier drinking from a bottle of wine. He had asked Commander Stevenson if he could have a bottle delivered to his home. The man said "yes" and promised to give him one tomorrow. Now the day had arrived and a lone SEP V3 tank came driving towards the mountains with a wine case carried on the stabilizer gun by its handle. The tank went up the slope and parked before the high rocky wall of the cliff. The tribe's home was nearby up there, but there was no way to reach there. Hercules came out of the tank and shouted for the tribe, "Hey, your majesty! I got ya the wine bottle you wanted!"

Gregarios heard the message he had been hoping for. He went to the cliff to look down and meet his deliveryman. He smiled, "Is that so? Why thank you! I'll be going to pick that up right now." He flew down towards the tank and landed beside it.

As Hercules was getting the wine case, a group of dragonets, baby dragons, were watching them from the top of the cliff. One of them asked their mother, "Mama, can we go see that human?"

The mother dragon permitted, "Of course, you may, dear."

The dragonets cheered, "Yay!"

The son told his friends, "Come on, let's go see the human and his tank!" The dragonets flew down to meet Hercules. All, except one, who just quietly stared at the man. This was one of the humans who had

killed his father during the first encounter of the two species. The dragonet had no interest in getting acquainted with this human. Instead, he huffed with contempt and turned to walk away.

Hercules opened the wine case and handed the bottle to the king. "Here you go, your majesty. A bottle of the best wine from California."

Gregarios appreciated, "Why thank you! I'll be sure to enjoy this at home and perhaps, even share it with the others."

"Hi, mister human!" beamed one of the dragonets as they landed.

The lieutenant tank commander turned to face the smiling and wide-eyed dragonets. He heartily greeted, "Ho ho! What do we have here? What brings you kiddies down here?"

A green dragonet said, "We just wanted to see you."

A blue dragonet asked, "Hey, is that a tank you got there?" The knowledge of what these metal carriages were called had spread around the tribe since the concordance with the army.

"Why it sure is!" Hercules grinned.

A black dragonet asked, "Can we go inside and look?"

The man permitted, "Of course, kiddies! Let me clear the boys out and then you can all come in." He took up his walkie-talkie and told his men, "Alright boys, get out of the tank. I want some kids who want to take a tour inside. Over."

The soldier inside replied, "Roger that, over." The soldiers climbed off the SEP V3 to make room for the guests.

With the tank empty of its occupants, Hercules invited the dragonets and gestured, "Alright kids, hop aboard! Uncle Hercules is gonna show you everything about the tank." The dragonet flew up to the still-open hatch and went down inside. The tank commander followed in after the last hatchling.

The dragonets were bunched closely together in this small room. One of them frowned, "Geez! It's so cramped in here."

Hercules understood the complaint and joked, "Well it sure ain't a house, that's for sure."

That same dragonet asked, "How do you stand this place?"

The man answered, "Buddy, you just got to get used to it. Anyway, let me show you all the things that's in this tank. Like take this computer system thing here." He pointed to a device with two sets of screens and many buttons on it. It was the commander's display unit (CDU). "This is a commander's independent thermal viewer, or as I say for short, CITV. I use this baby to see what's outside the tank around me."

Wanting to give the CITV a try, the blue dragonet asked, "Can I look at it?"

"Of course, kid," Hercules replied. He picked up the little dragon and helped him up to the CITV. "These screens here," he began to explain. He pointed to the upper screen and said, "The top one is for scanning, tracking and getting the range of everything in sight. Let's get a look of your king to show you what I'm talking about." He turned the camera around onto Gregarios, who was getting a taste of his wine.

The blue dragonet saw that everything on the screen was all in one color. He asked, "Why's everything all green?"

Hercules was unsure of this himself, "That's just how the camera sees things, kid. I don't know myself, but at least it's good for seeing things in the dark." Then he tapped on the bottom screen to bring the dragonet's attention to there. "And this screen is our map. It shows me where I'm at and where everything else is at."

The blue dragonet was amazed. "So that's how you know your way around!"

"Yep!" Hercules grinned. "Amazing, isn't it?"

The other dragonets started to clammer to see the CITV themselves. They asked, "Can I see it, too?" "Yeah, me too!" "I want to look!"

The man was happy to show them all. He said, "Okay, okay, one at a time. I'll let you all have a go at it." He let each dragonet take a look at the screens as he explained their functions. Once he was done with that, he said, "Now let me show you where we keep our ammo." He pressed a button and then a metal door slid itself open, displaying the rounds that were inside. He takes out a strange white & blue cylinder with a needle at the front tip of it. The man tells them, "This is the round that is useful for penetrating thick armor. It's made out of a heavy dense metal called tungsten and the weight of it is not only used to penetrate thicker armor, but it's also dang good for knocking out even most tanks from other countries. It's an APFSDS, short for Armor-Piercing Fin Stabilized Discarding Sabo. But when I ask my crew to load it besides other rounds, I will say "Load Sabo" and they'll put 'em in." He put it back into the storage with the other ammo and pressed a button to slide the door closed, ceiling the round safely inside the weapon's rack. Then Hercules went to the next part of the tank. "Now kids, I'm going to show you the gunner's place. It was right where you were at." He pointed to the bottom section of the tank. Hercules went to the gunner's place as the dragonets watched from the commander's place. He pointed to a circular thing with a headrest on top. "This is the scope for my gunner to see outside through. By the

way, I never got to show you kids that we can switch between day made and night mode our cameras. So I'm going to show you with the gunner's."

A brown dragonet leapt down to him and asked, "Will the screen look any different?"

Hercules answered, "Of course it will. It'll be in all color. Now you look through this scope and watch."

The dragonet pressed his face towards the scope and in a few seconds, the man toggled the screen from day vision to night vision. The dragonet watched the camera screen go from all color to all shades of green. "Whoa! It changed."

Hercules nodded, "Yep, now it's on night vision. The colored screen is for daylight. I left my CITV on night mode, because I can still function any time of the day with it. Now that I've shown you everything in here. Who wants to check out the outer parts of my tank?" The dragonets all voiced their desire to know more about the tank. "Okay, come on outside and I'll tell you all about them." Everyone got back outside through the hatch and the dragonets sat together as an audience besides the king as they watched the man and his SEP V3. The tank commander stood before his tank and showed them the weapon part of his vehicle. "This right here, kiddies, is a L/44 Rheinmetall smoothbore gun."

One of the dragonets with curious eyes, asked, "What is a smoothbore gun?"

The man answered, "Why it's a gun without any rifling."

"Rifling?" asked another dragonet, ignorant as to what that word means.

Wagging his finger around, Hercules explained, "It's the spiraling grooves inside the barrel. Rifled guns have 'em, but smoothbores don't." The dragonets understood what grooves look like, but they have never seen them in a gun before. Though they did kind of get the idea of what the grooves would look like inside a gun. The man continued, "We don't call this gun the L/44 Rheinmetall, but some folks do, just not all the time. We got this baby from another country."

The green dragonet asked, "There are other countries that give weapons to you?"

Hercules confirmed, "Yep! My country's allied with many other nations around the world, which gives us access to the most advanced technologies known." Going back to the gun, he continued, "And by the way, we call this gun, the M256A1." He began to explain the parts of the weapon. Pointing to the end part, he stated, "This is its gun breach. It's attached to the rack where we reload it with rounds to shoot at our enemies." After Hercules explained everything else about the tank, he concluded, "And that's all there is to the tank, kids. So, did you all enjoy learning about it?"

"We did!" the dragonets answered. They voiced their satisfaction with the lecture.

Gregarios said, "That was quite the interesting information."

Hercules smiled, "And you all learned something new today. Come over to our base anytime and we'll show you all more of our stuff."

The green dragonet said, "That sounds exciting! I can't wait to see what else you have!"

The others said, "Yeah!" and "Me too!"

The tank commander told, "I'll be glad to have you all over. Just don't forget to ask permission from your parents first, okay?"

"We will," the dragonets chorused.

Hercules said, "Anyway, it's been nice hanging out with you all. I gotta get back to the base. You all take care now!"

Gregarios told, "Send my regards to Commander Stevenson."

Hercules replied to the king, "I will." Then he turned to his men, "Alright boys, let's get back in and head out."

The soldiers got back into the tank as the dragonets gave their farewell, "Bye!" Then the SEP V3 drove back to the base.

I thought this would be the last chapter, but turns out we got like 2 or 3 chapters left according to the requester's comment on the previous chapter. And as a reminder to him, I will not be going past Chapter 10, because with the 22 pages length I've been giving the recent chapters, it's starting to look like a novel-length story, which is the type of request I don't like to do.

All characters (c)



Links to chapters:

Chapter 1 - fav.me/dd1hayh

Chapter 2 - fav.me/ddchqrs

Chapter 3 - fav.me/ddf6vo0

Chapter 4 - fav.me/ddnguiw

Chapter 5 - fav.me/ddoaegh

Chapter 6 - fav.me/ddr2pqj

Chapter 7 - Here!

Chapter 8 - fav.me/ddwljtx

Chapter 9 - fav.me/ddxt8uy