

Normal morning routine in the Sardine's Roll. Sylv ordered the same meal they did every morning, decaf coffee with a plate of blueberry pancakes and bacon. Nessa, the waitress, knew their order by heart, already grabbing the creamer as soon as they'd finished rattling off the same short list.

It certainly was a small town's diner. Not much happened out this way, other than the occasional lost tourist looking for Seattle. Everybody knew everybody, and nearly the entire town knew Sylv after they'd moved here three years ago. A welcoming bunch, for sure. Which, as they sipped the coffee Nessa had just set down, was something they still had to get used to.

"Anything special happenin'? Markus mentioned you're tryna buy Clarice's old bookstore, you thinkin' of starting up shop down here?"

Sylv glanced up from their plate, not managing to meet Nessa's eyes as she flitted back and forth, setting down plates and refilling glasses. "Eh... more of a hobby... thinking about opening up an occult shop, actually."

That made her pause. "An... occult shop? Down here? I doubt anyone's gonna take that seriously, Sy."

"Like I said. Just a hobby."

Nessa finally managed to get done with everyone at the bar, earning her a moment's break. She leaned against the counter in front of Sylv, watching them eat.

"Hey. You do you, man, just a little surprised is all. Yeah, sure, people say that old house you moved into is proly haunted, but you think people take that kinda stuff seriously over this way? You'd proly do better setting the bookstore back up."

"Oh, shush. That house is not *haunted*, it's *cursed*. There is a *difference*. And besides, I'm planning on restocking some of those books. *Some* of them."

"Your funeral, man."

And as the doors dinged open, Nessa was whisked back to her duties as waitress.

Sylv had their reasons. They knew what they were doing. And they'd chosen Concord for a reason.

Quiet little unsuspecting Washington town, not too dissimilar from Arcadia Bay in *Life is Strange*. Nobody else sensed it, but Sylv knew big changes were coming. Not just here, but globally. Changes they'd been waiting for for a *while* now.

Strike while the iron is hot, as their mother had always said.

Going back to their pancakes, the TV hanging over the bar caught their attention. It seemed to be some sort of talk show, and as they glanced up, they could see they weren't the only one taking interest.

Some bigwig talk show from one of the big Seattle channels. That in itself wasn't unusual, seeing as Seattle had enough over-the-air power to have given every cable channel over the air for free. No, the hostess' guests were the oddities, and as they took another bite, they couldn't help but smile.

"Certainly, this is- unprecedented, to say the least. Two archaeologists, both of which completely unrelated to the other, going out on two completely different expeditions and ending up with the same result: Coming back completely different. I'm sure I'm not the only one wondering what's going on here-"

The talk show hostess set her coffee mug down, clearly trying not to stare at the guests in front of her. Which didn't go unnoticed, as the man closest to her chuckled in response.

"I know the situation is- more than a bit unusual, but I assure you, and anyone watching- it's very much real. All of this is very much real. And I believe this is only the start of somethin we can't control."

The hostess, seated behind a wooden counter with 'Mornings with Emily' painted on the front, enthusiastically nodded. "And would you care to elaborate on that a little further, Dr...?"

"I'd prefer Odon, please. And certainly!"

The man speaking (or, *dragon* was a more appropriate term, if "hybrid" was in poor taste) sat forward. Dressed in a crisp white suit, it contrasted nicely with the deep ebony and flecked silver of his scales, and the tie matched perfectly with dark blue irises. Wings and tail folded neatly onto the small couch upon which he was sitting, it was clear he'd gotten used to having to sit like this, crossing his digitigrade legs as though he'd done it a thousand times.

"While it is true that what happened to Robert and I was extremely similar, and even ended up in similar results, we did this completely on our own. Neither of us knew the other existed- and we'd only heard about the other as the word eventually and inevitably made it's way through the grapevine! It's a wonderful thing, chance... but I believe there's a little more than *chance* at play here."

"Right. I know you both were archeologists before this happened, mind explaining what that was like?"

Odon laughed, a lighthearted sound despite how deep and rough his voice was. “*Were?* I’m still doing archaeology to this day! I can’t speak for Robert here, but just because I found Odon doesn’t mean I’m giving up what I love, oh no.”

The hostess cocked her head, exaggeratedly confused. “But you said you’d *found* Odon, and yet-”

“Yes, I know. It’s- a little confusing. But Odon was a millennia-old Norse dragon, he’d been betrayed by the Vikings and went into a sort of self-exile. But I’d been the first to find him in all that time, and he gifted his dying soul to me. In a way, I’m still Dr. Reiner... but I’m very much also Odon.”

A contented grumble from behind the couch. The camera panned out, showing the large feral dragon right behind Odon. This one was much bigger than the host or Odon, and much heavier set as well. Dark scales, similar to Odon’s, but much more iridescent, with red plated scales over his arms, legs, wings and parts of his neck, as well as a bright crimson underbelly squished up under him as he laid out, taking up nearly half the stage space. He leaned his head down, seeming to want in on the conversation.

“I’ve had to stop my archaeology days now, myself. I’m perfectly happy staying around the Seattle area, going where I’m needed. Much different from Dr. Odon here, I’d say!”

The hostess gave a slight chuckle, visibly uncomfortable but trying to hide it. “Right! Dr. Robert Lane, correct?”

The fat dragon laughed, a truly jovial sound. “Odon here is the one with the doctorate, not me! But yes, I still use Rober Lane. Haven’t exactly come up with a better name, might as well still use the one I have.”

“And if you don’t mind, Robert, care to reiterate your story to our viewers...?”

“Gladly. I, like Dr. Odon here, was on a solo archaeology site in Eastern India. Temple of Diaspora, offshoot of the Romans. There was this little golden dragon statue, and when I picked it up... it gifted me with this.”

He shifted slightly, scooting the entire couch a little bit. He went on.

“Not so fancy as Odon’s story, for sure. Nor do I have any of his flashy abilities, but it did give me a purpose: to protect. And so, I came back to Seattle to do just that: protect.”

The hostess laughed, a fake, tinny sound compared to the other two. “And how’s that been going? Protecting Seattle isn’t exactly an easy time!”

“No, it isn’t! But if you’ve noticed within the past couple of weeks, crime within Seattle has dropped. Drastically. Nothing like a dragon to scare people from stealing your purse!”

Robert sat up, somehow managing to fluff himself out a little despite the lack of fur. He looked visibly pleased, and Sylv chuckled. Man definitely deserved it.

“Moving on, back to you, Doctor. You mentioned before that this is ‘the start of something we can’t control’. Care to elaborate on that a little more for us?”

“Certainly. And I’ll put it quite plainly, too:

Magic.

“I wholly believe what happened to me, what happened to Robert, is far from two isolated incidents. Magic was always there, in the form of myths and legends we put on the shelf to collect dust. And now, we’re starting to see it resurface again, latching onto people and changing them. While Robert and I might be some of the first, I doubt we’re the last. Magic has most definitely come back, and Emily, it’s here to stay.”

“Interesting... what about science? What implications do you think this has on scientific technology and breakthroughs?”

This time, Robert piped in from behind the couch again. “I had a portable camera with me when I visited Diaspora. Throughout everything that happened, that camera worked completely fine. I’d say I don’t think magic and science can’t coexist, but it needs to be mutual. A fine balance, you know?”

The hostess and Odon both nodded, and the latter added onto that. “I agree. From what testing we did with what we’d recovered from the Switzerland site, we had no idea the bones we’d recovered were magical in nature. T’s going to take some getting used to, for certain, but I don’t think magic and science are going to be mutually exclusive. In other words, nothing should change. Much.”

The hostess smiled, nodding again. “Well, thank you both for coming in! Everyone, give a round of applause for Dr. Odon and Robert Lane! Their findings have had absolute breakthroughs in understanding regarding myth and legend, and even spell out implications of magic as a whole. That’s all the time we have, though, so thank you both for coming in!”

Odon and Robert both ducked their heads in a show of respect, and the screen cut to commercials.

“Well waddaya know. Maybe you’re onto somethin’, Sy.”

Nessa jerked Sylv out of their focus, making them blink.
Right. Diner. Breakfast.

Nessa continued pouring a customer's drink as she went on. "If I didn't know any better, I'd say you knew this was comin'! But hey, who am I to jump to conclusions? We've known ya for years!"

And as Sylv finished off the last little bit of bacon, they sheepishly nodded along with what Nessa said. "Yeah... crazy, right? I mean, how could anyone possibly predict that?"

Nessa laughed, which did little to dispel the unease in the back of Sylv's mind. As she collected their plates, they were already pulling out the necessary cash.

"Hey, you don't need to leave a tip, man!"

"Nessa, we've been over this how many times now? I can't just take amazing customer service and *not leave a tip*, it's just impolite!"

"Oh- you. Go on! Sucker."

Same song and dance.
Sylv loved the Sardine's Roll.

They bundled their coat a little more against the fall wind, staring up at the "SOLD" sign in the window of the old bookstore. Taking out their keys, it took them a few moments to find the right one, but eventually the lock clicked just as it was supposed to, letting them in.

As the door closed they made sure to wave a hand over in the direction of the front windows, immediately giving them a mirrored effect as the privacy spell kicked in. Taking out their phone, they stared at their reflection, a young white male with blue eyes, short brown hair and a little goatee to match. But as they dropped the cloaking spell they always had on in public, that reflection melted into a dragon's. Blue and black scales, light blue hair and a noticeable lack of wings, but the tail was still definitely there. But Sylv couldn't change clothing, only cloak their appearance, so the bicolor beanie, half-moon glasses, leather jacket studded with various pins and ribbons and athletic pants over worn combat boots stayed the exact same.

Nessa had hit a little closer to home than she realized.

Sylv *had* seen this coming, actually. They'd seen it coming from miles away, literally, and wanted to make sure they chose somewhere with a rich magical history to settle down in before everything happened. Dragons were inherently magical creatures, after all, which was no surprise that two of the first cases of humans being transformed were, in fact, related to dragons. But they had no doubt, as magic started seeping its way more and more into everyday life, that more and more people would find themselves with a few different forms than just *dragon*.

Which brought them to Clarice's old bookstore.

They had taken a look around, at the old and dusty wooden shelves stacked in the corner, to the few torn pages lying strewn about, and immediately felt the strong magical aura of this place. *'It was perfect... absolutely perfect.'*

And now, almost five months later, they'd finally managed to buy the building off Clarice.

'Let's see... divination can be over here. Crystals, statues, wearables all on that wall... Entire bookshelves of how-to books, cookbooks, mythology and reference books... but what on the back wall? Hm... I'll still have to figure out the layout a little more.'

But for now, everything was perfect. Sylv finally had a front to start gradually introducing much-needed transformation into the world, and just like Odon and Robert, more and more people would start to feel more comfortable in their own skin. Or fur. Or feathers. Or scales...

Oh yes. Magic was most definitely making a return.

Sylv smiled.

They'd make sure of it.