

Part 2

The world had gone numb and dark for Fray, the poor Andalusian horse that had been unfortunate enough to end up in the ownership of a human knight. Ever since he had ended up with the prat his life had been unstable. Some times he would be left in a small stable for weeks; even months on end to be fattened and ready to undertake the next epic quest that came their way. While having these 'curves' on his figure: with a larger than usual rump and rounded belly might have made him a good show horse or indeed more attractive to other horses, it was a nightmare when the human would suddenly decide to embark on his next journey. Fray would of course be hideously unfit, making the extra weight a real strain to carry. Apparently the knight did not get the message when his saddle barely made it around his middle. Off they would trek across mountains and deserts until Fray was exhausted and starved half to death. Clearly the man was a disaster waiting to happen. A disaster like this.

Fray was forced suddenly in to consciousness. He was utterly soaked, had he fallen in the river? Trying to move he found that he was being pinned down by something. Wearily Fray lifted his head to survey the surroundings and instantly wished he hadn't, his worst fear had been realised. Obviously his knight had been killed and unfortunately as he had wished, he had not shared the same fate as there looming over him with a grin of a thousand gleaming teeth stood the dragon.

Not knowing what else to say or do he spluttered. "Urm... Hello."

There was nowhere to run, the dragon held him down heavily enough that it might draw blood with even the slightest bit of extra pressure. Fray Winced. "You're... hurting me!"

The Dragon seemed genuinely taken aback. "Oh I'm sorry." It said in a rather sarcastic voice.

The creature lifted its powerful paw off Fray's belly and in to the air. 'This is it. This is how I'm going to die.' He shut his eyes and braced for the inevitable, but the killer blow did not come. Instead he felt a gentle soothing sensation across his middle, this was definitely not something he had expected.

'Is this what its like to be dead?' He thought to himself.

Slowly he opened his eyes and shivered as his eyes again met the dragons. To his surprise though, he found the dragon stroking his paunch. It was a relaxing feeling, one that he had not experienced before, or cared to experience at all under the current circumstances.

A grin even more sinister than before spread across the dragons maw, revealing an uncountable amount of teeth. "You and me are going to have some fun."

He had no idea how to react to this, but somehow knew that the creature did not want to have a game of tag, and if he did... Fray did not want to know what would happen to the loser. "Wha... What kind of f-fun?" He asked nervously, almost instantly regretting it.

"Sorry about that, I should have phrased that as 'I am going to have some fun'." It said, almost as if trying to sound sincere.

Fray thought as much. "But wha..."

"Hush horsey, relax. You seem agitated."

Was it seriously kidding? Of course he was agitated, frantic would be a better word to describe how he was feeling. Obviously this could only end badly for the horse, why should he not feel agitated?

The dragon moved away from him and walked casually to the waters edge. It knelt down and lapped at the calm water. "My name is Katal. What do I call you gentle stallion?"

It would not have thought him gentle if it had seen some of battles that he had been in, or heard some of his thoughts on how to deal with the late Sir 'Whats-his-name-again' who had dragged him half way around the world and back again multiple times. It was time to think rationally, he need to get out of this ordeal, maybe if he played the dragons games he could find a way of tricking the creature. For now at least, it seemed to be the only option to present itself. "My name is Fray kind dragon."

Katal lifted its head from the water and walked back towards the stallion, who was still laying on his side. "And what would a rather plump stallion like yourself be doing with a horrible creature like that?"

It said and pointed at the scorch mark that used to be the knight.

Did the dragon just call him plump? Fray glanced at his heavy set frame. He had not had to travel far enough to work off the weight he had collected from the last time he was at the stables. Fray really would make a fine meal for the dragon. "I assure you it was not by choice." He responded.

Unexpectedly the dragon lay down on its side at an angle to the horse and rested its massive head on Fray's belly, slightly winding him as it settled. Fray was surprised and a little unnerved by the dragons casual demeanour, it was a very difficult creature to read. He quickly looked the dragon from top to bottom, hopefully it would have a weakness that could be exploited. Its red amour covered most of its head, but only the back of the body. Instead of scales or armour, Katal's underbelly was a pale yellow colour and soft looking. The absence of amour started at the neck and then carried on to its chest and then belly, which was more rounded than what would have been expected, and spilled out over the ground slightly. Fray scanned past the bottom end of its belly where it curved back inwards again and met the dragons crotch. "A male." Thought Fray. "Definitely a male!"

He quickly looked back up and met the dragons brilliant amber eyes.

Katal smiled and tilted his head slightly, almost seeming to blush.

"Do carry on." He said.

"Well honestly I hated the knight, we had no relationship worth talking about. I do not even remember his name!"

"Why did you hate him so much?"

"He imprisoned me! I was forced to travel great distances with him to fight in battles and visit places that I should have never had anything to do with. And to make it worse, when not travelling I was locked in a stable instead of being allowed to roam around his numerous fields!"

It actually felt good to vent his anger out to someone, even if that someone happened to be a dragon.

"Locked in a stable? I can believe that. If something good came out of that knight, it must be have been locking you in that stable, because it has made you quite fat." With this Katal put a paw on his rump and squeezed it firmly.

The horse gave a little yelp.

“Your stomach is making quite a nice pillow.”

Fray continued, hardly listening to a word the dragon was saying. “I hated him! And all the other people who kept me there. There was nothing I could do, I was at the mercy of them all until either I or the knight was dead!” He paused for a moment. The dragon was really hanging on to every word he said, naturally it too would share a hatred for humans. Which brought him to wonder. Why was this dragon not demanding food from local villagers like all the other dragons he had heard of, until they were eventually slain or driven away at least. Maybe Katal had had a bad encounter with a knight! Could it be possible that this particular dragon was actually somewhat afraid of humans? Or at least found them to be too troublesome to deal with.

Either way this gave Fray an idea. “I may have been at the mercy of them... But you certainly are not! My knight was sent on a mission here by the local town to find your treasure, they had assumed that you were dead! Have you grown so lazy or perhaps even fearful of them, for them to see so little of you that they think you are dead?”

The dragon jumped to its feet in anger. Fray wondered if he had gone too far, if he was not careful, Katal could turn on him in rage. “You think that I am afraid of humans!” He roared.

It turned parallel to him and stood arrogantly, displaying himself to the stallion. “Have a good look at me. Am I not magnificent? You think any sword or bow scares me! Ha!” He snorted. “No blade or arrow can harm me!”

This was the chance that he needed, to study his captor properly. His plan was working so well that the creature was actually putting himself display to the horse. Fray finally seized the chance to stand up and took a good look at the dragon. Like most other dragons he had 2 long terrible horns on his head and was a deal taller at the shoulder than the already large stallion and more than twice as long to the tip of his tail. Though his chest was not as barrel-like as was described, nor his limbs as muscled. Instead he had a bulging belly, possibly from a recent meal, though this would not explain the fat apparent in other areas. As he circled behind he took note of his long tail, it certainly looked like it could do some serious damage, despite the dragons apparent lack of condition. His rump was large for a dragon, well rounded and padded with fat. This was emphasized slightly as his great wings; which were folded parallel to his back, stuck out and dipped slightly past his rump. Although his rump was at the same level as his shoulders, his back dipped slightly under the weight of his paunch, making it seem bigger than it was.

While the only dragons that Fray had heard of had been described as having a slender form, the rump on this one gave him an appearance vaguely similar to that of a horse, though longer at the torso. As he circled around to the left side he noticed a scar on Katal's rear leg. He had been wounded badly by a sword at some point, obviously he was not as impervious as he claimed.

“Magnificent indeed dragon!” Fray responded. He chose his next words carefully. “If a little on the... Chunky side. I suspect that you are not afraid of the humans as I first claimed. But have maybe grown a little lazy as of late?”

The great dragon turned and glared angrily at him, perhaps his words had not been chosen carefully enough. “Lazy you claim? Let me tell you that what I am; is a successful hunter. It is a very rare occasion that my prey escapes my appetite...”

Fray shifted uneasily as Katal glanced up and down the stallions body, if he was not careful, his next words could be his last. “Forgive me I have misspoken, what I meant to say of course was that... The Askolov must be getting bolder to keep such a great dragon as yourself at bay.”

The very notion seemed to amuse Katal. "Ha! You think that the humans of that dismal town could possibly be bold? I think not!" The dragon broke eye contact. "No, I have been otherwise... Occupied."

It seemed unlikely to Fray that this creature would have anything to do out in the highland forests on his own, apart from eat and sleep on his treasure. "I am curious, what is it that a dragon does with all the free time he must have?"

This time much to the horses surprise, it was the dragon who seemed uneasy. "What I do in my free time..." He lifted a paw and scratched under his jaw. "I spend most of my time..."

"Surely you must have many interesting hobbies, the like of which would amaze a humble horse."

The great dragon placed his paw back on the ground and gave up. "Well perhaps I do not have many hobbies to keep me occupied." He once again turned to face the Fray. "But do not think for a second that I gave up the humans offerings because I am afraid of them."

Fray now knew that this particular dragon was not a good liar. "As I thought, anyone would be truly foolish to believe that."

"That they would stallion. Though I possibly have become lazy. Askolov was a lot of trouble to deal with, not that it matters now, I am doing fine for myself!" He said and poked at his underbelly with a paw.

Now was the time to turn the tables in his favour. "They would appear to be giving you trouble regardless of your stance on the town. Perhaps you should reconsider making demands to them, you would have an infinite supply of food and treasure at no extra cost to yourself."

The dragon stopped for a moment and appeared to be in deep thought. "Perhaps you are right. They are attacking me whether or not I leave them alone!" He bellowed "It is time to make Askolov suffer!"

Fray continued. "Your extra weight after all only adds to your magnificence, the villagers will be greatly intimidated by your form."

Katal stood arrogantly and proudly and held his head high in the air. "I am to be feared by that dismal little town! Apperceive my great belly stallion."

It was best at this point to do as the dragon commanded, Fray's plan was going exactly as he had hoped. He walked over the the dragons hanging paunch and gently nudged the under part with his nose. It was surprising soft to the touch. Out of curiosity he pushed his nose right in to the soft under belly, which almost swallowed his entire nose until he reached a denser part. Apparently the dragon had already had a large meal, this was possibly why it had been so tolerant of the rather appetizing looking horse. Dragons were usually very slender around the waist, this was perhaps why even though Katal's belly was not disproportionately large, not even as big as some horses mid sections in comparison to their frames, it was still double the width it would normally have been and therefore very soft.

Katal let out a small burp. "I have to admit to you now, I had intentions of eating you. Many horses that have wondered in to my forest have become apart of my magnificent form."

Fray moved back nervously from the dragon, it was fairly obvious that he had intentions of eating the defenceless horse. "And you... Have no intentions now?"

"I have never considered befriending a horse before, but you are the first creature to talk some sense in to me. So to answer your question, no I have no intentions of eating you now. In fact, when I return from Askolov I have intentions of rewarding you! You may pick any item from my treasure for yourself."

The stallion was genuinely taken aback, he looked in deep in to the creatures amber eyes and wondered what he was really planning, it was very unlikely that all this dragon wanted was a friendship, more likely he planned to fatten Fray up and give him self an easier meal at the same time... But those eyes, for a second he thought he saw a glimmer of something, some kind of deep loneliness or a fear that no mortal could understand.

Time flowed unnaturally for the time that he looked in to the dragons eyes, it could have been a minute, or perhaps even 20! Suddenly he felt uneasy, this was no time to try to understand the deeper feelings of a dragon. Fray broke eye contact and tried to slowly back away from the dragons eerie stare. Something was wrong though, Fray tried his hardest to pull himself backwards, but all he could manage was a slow stumble. There was no time to find out what was wrong with him, it was more than fear that was stopping him, it was as if he was pushing himself against a wall of water, he had to think fast and respond to the dragon before it thought something was wrong. "That is a very kind offer Katal... But I have no use for treasure, the only material possession a horse wishes to posses is food and shelter." Fray immediately regretted the last part.

"Food and shelter? I have an idea..." Katal responded. His eyes moved to meet Fray's and once again time seemed to slow down and distort, bird song sounded as if it was in reverse, the wind seemed to shift strangely and collapse in around the stallion, despite all the dragon seemed immune to nature distorting all around them, and that was not the worst part. "...If you stay with me, you can have all the food and water that you desire, and perhaps more."

The stallion was totally gripped under the dragon's spell, all he could do was nod slowly as the world shifted around him.
