

Fresh

*Ding dong...*

The airplane sounded as Kang was awoken from his deep slumber. He removed his blindfold from his eyes as he was greeted with the bright, penetrating lights of the cabin, putting his big, scaly hand up to block them. A flight attendant soon came over and requested that he put his seat up, as it was reclined since he spent about ten of the fourteen-hour flight catching up on sleep.

Safe to say it didn't help him feel much energy, just sloppy. But with all the noise of people getting their bags and many people stumbling out of the plane, it only made him feel more awake. So, deciding he better get going, he holds down a button on his armrest and finds himself elevating up, before coming to an upright position. He reaches and grabs his neck pillow and shoves it in his already very packed bag as he gets ready to deboard.

Soon, he was walking across the cold tile floor of the airport as he looked around, figuring out where to go. He adjusted his black jacket and red shirt a bit due to how ruffled they were, as well as to make sure his wings weren't in an uncomfortable position. He looked up at the airport terminal signs with arrows of where to go, trying to remember what he learned about reading English. Luckily, they had little illustrations that explained what the words were. He saw the suitcase symbol and began to head in the direction it pointed.

He walked past many American fast-food places in a big open area full of tables and eating areas. Kang smirked to himself as he looked around; one thing was certain to him, that Oxley's airport was nowhere near like the Incheon Airport. And that thought reminded him of his home, he was going to miss South Korea, knowing he wouldn't be able to go back for several

months. But his parents assured him that this school in Oxley was going to be a great fit for him and his psychology ambitions.

He heads down an escalator before seeing a sign being held by an official-looking German shepherd. He was wearing a prestigious suit with the academy's symbol on his chest. He had a group of other people of similar ages to him, as Kang assumed this was someone meant to pick up all the international students flying in.

He walked over and asked politely, "Hello, sir... are you with Oxley Academy?"

The German shepherd turned to him, looking through some glasses at him and smiling, "I am! What is your name?"

"Kang Jin-ryong! I am from South Korea."

He nodded as he looked through a clipboard of names, and checked off one, before turning to him, "Welcome to Oxley! I am Henry Seigfried, Dean of International Students, but you can call me Hank or Mr. Seigfried."

Kang bowed to him, "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Seigfried."

Mr. Seigfried laughed, "Oh, thank you, but you don't need to bow to me. I am not that important."

"Sorry... It's just a common thing for my culture." Kang said, adjusting his backpack on his back.

"I understand, but feel free to be at ease here, enjoy your time here while you can." Mr. Seigfried said with a kind smile.

“Thank you, I imagine I will, I have heard great things about this city and this academy,” Kang said, relaxing a bit more from the talk with this gentleman dog.

“We hope not to disappoint you then!” Mr. Seigfried said.

Kang nodded before asking, “Will I need to go pick up my luggage?”

“Yes! Now that we have you, we can head on over and get everything.”

Mr. Seigfried gestured to the group to follow him, as all the foreign students did as the dog instructed, making it over to a large set of conveyors. Kang found the number of his carousel and was instructed to return when he got all he needed.

Kang quickly headed over and, after some minutes of waiting, grabbed his two suitcases worth of clothes and other necessities and rolled them back over to the dog. Mr. Seigfried then led the group out to a big bus, loading their bags into the back. And just a little over twenty minutes later, they were well on their way to the university. Kang sat in a seat by himself, even though his wings were folded in; no one seemed to want to sit next to him, probably because of his intimidating features, horns, and scales. But he didn’t mind, he liked the peace.

The red dragon sighed as he looked out the window, taking in the views of the tall towers, mixed with the luscious forestry surrounding it all. It was an intricate city, unique but just as beautiful as the photos he saw online. It took him back to that time when he got accepted to Oxley Academy and was eager to see how brilliant it was. He smiled as he took in the fresh new atmosphere. It wasn’t home, but he could get used to it.

After about a forty-minute drive from the airport, the shuttle arrived at the university outside of a dorm building where they all got out, grabbed their stuff, and were led to their rooms

one at a time. Kang's room ended up on the fifth and highest floor, as Mr. Seigfried led him into his room and gave him his key.

"I got you this nice upper floor, especially since you are a dragon, if you ever need to just jump out and fly to class, I figured it could be good for that."

Kang turned to the German shepherd, "Ohhh, I don't really fly much, heh, but I suppose it is a nice view of the campus."

The dragon looked out the window and could see a view of the bigger center field of the campus, and several buildings all around it. It was becoming increasingly clear that this was no small place.

Mr. Seigfried replied, "Ohhh, sorry for the assumption, I don't know enough about you dragons, so I just figured with the wings, you might do that. But anyway, I hope you find it nice here."

"It's alright, I get it. And I think I will, it is beautiful." Kang smiled as he looked out his window, before turning to ask, "So, what happens now?"

"Well, you can settle in here, get all moved on. And then before school starts, we will have a couple of fairs these next two weeks, and you'll be able to see things about the school, different clubs, and you can find some pop-up shops with things you can use to decorate your room a bunch. And then you should have an email waiting for you that will give you access to our dining hall menus, locations, and hours, as well as some times for all the welcoming week activities and information about them."

Kang listened closely and nodded, surprised by the efficiency. “Perfect! Thank you, I will get to those.”

The dog smiled, “Of course, Kang. It is a pleasure to have you here, I look forward to talking with you more.”

With that, the two said goodbye, and Kang was left alone in his room. His dorm was moderately sized, he had his own bathroom, a little walk-in closet, a nice-sized full bed, a desk, and some dressers to use for clothes. Kang began to work diligently to unpack his things. He started putting on some bed sheets he had brought with him, before setting all his clothes in the dressers and closet, and finishing off by setting up his computer and desktop, placing things on his desk and on his nightstand.

After about thirty minutes, Kang stood in his new room, hands on his hips as he smiled at it all. He definitely was going to need decorations, but for now, he was happy with the look. His pointed ears then perked as he looked out the window to see quite a bit of activity about. He remembered what the dog had mentioned about an email, and went over to his computer and logged in. He looked at his school email to see a message with a link to a schedule of events. He discovered that there was a campus-wide communal meeting in the courtyard area right now. The schedule explained that this event is an invitation for anyone new to walk around, get familiar with the campus, and meet new people.

Kang blushed a bit as he was a little nervous to do such a thing. He was introverted and pretty shy for a dragon. Which he knew could make him seem off-putting. It was also his first time outside of South Korea, so he was worried he would stand out like a sore thumb.

However, Kang shook his head, he needed to be determined. He had a feeling that if he was going to have a fresh new start in this country and this place, he needed to have a fresh new personality.

So he grabbed his dorm key and headed out. Heading down a flight of stairs to the bottom and heading out of the dorm towards the wide-open field, surrounded by buildings and overhead archways that had pathways going all about different buildings and different areas of the academy. He smiled at it all as he folded his wings behind himself to take away any intimidating qualities.

There were a lot of students out and about, and some of them seemed to keep to themselves. But as he walked, he frowned. Noticing just how much people seemed to stare at him. He didn't really understand why. Maybe because he was a dragon, or maybe his colors looked cool. But a lot of people seemed to check him out as he walked.

Kang flushed in embarrassment, not understanding why he stood out so much and was sort of hoping people would just look away. But they didn't, and it made him upset. He decided he would get out of the way of all the people around and went over to a small garden area to sit down on a bench. Staring at a lovely bunch of fresh flowers.

The beauty of the garden distracted him as he breathed and relaxed, feeling the stress leave. As he took in the fresh air and the wonderful sounds of some running fountain water, it made it all better.

He began to think about it all. He knew he would probably stand out a bit, especially being international. But he didn't realize he had that much of an attractive quality to him. But it wasn't the first time he had been treated like this.

In Korea, he stood out quite a bit just for being a dragon. A lot of people can be quite brutal towards dragons, thinking that they are just mean, grumpy lizards. Dangerous and unpredictable. And he faced a lot of bullying because of it. It was part of the reason he came to a place because he knew it had lots of diversity, lots of different people with different backgrounds, and he thought that because of that, he might not stand out as much. But these reactions to him felt strange, they reminded him of his past. And he couldn't help but wonder why he couldn't just be left alone?

It was then that he heard a group of students near him. Some giggling as he looked out of the corner of his eyes to see two females, a bird, and a lioness, with two males, a gator and a husky. They seemed to be good friends, walking and chatting it up. But Kang just kept his business to himself, as he stared again at the flowers.

Before one of them, the lioness shouts out at him, "Omg!!! A dragon?" she said, rushing over, "Hello!!!"

Kang looked up, surprised, but just smiled shyly and raised his scaly hand to wave, "Uhm... Hi!"

"Oh! And you have wings too!!! Wow!!! You look so... so hot!"

Kang blushed as he heard that. "Thank you?"

"Of course!" She then turns to her friends, "Rachel! Zayne! Alex! Come look at this guy!"

Kang looked at the other three as they came over, and began to look at him. At first, he thought the intentions were innocent with the friendly greeting. But soon he just felt like an animal in a zoo exhibit.

“C-Can I help you guys?” Kang asked, trying to redirect this interaction.

The lioness smirked and responded, “Maybe help us to a piece of you...”

“W-What do you mean...?” Kang questioned, really getting uncomfortable as his heartbeat picked up its pace.

The bird then leaned forward and brushed her talon claw against his chest as Kang shouted, “Ah!”

Pushing the hand away, he quickly got up and backed away as the husky asked, “Where are you running, buddy? We just want to take in how amazing you look! That is all.”

“No... I don’t like to be touched. If you want to talk, we can talk, but I am nothing special. I don’t like being ogled at.”

“But you have such sex appeal.” The lioness said, before advancing on him and grabbing him and pulling him into her, “Makes a kitty want to go crazy!” she stated, as he immediately pushed her off of him with some force, as she yelped.

“Please stop!” Kang shouted, now getting a bit furious.

However, he gulped as the big gator stepped forward. “Woah mate!” he said with an Aussie accent. “Did you just shove her? What are you trying to do? Hurt her?”

“No... I asked you guys to stop. This is my first time here, I am just a freshman. Just want to keep to myself because I don’t like this attention. So please, just back off, and we can go our separate ways.”

“Nah mate... we were being nice. But now, you started something.” The gator then made an advance on him, as Kang had no choice but to put up his hands in a growl.



“Dragon got jaws heh!” The husky remarked, noticing the intense teeth glaring growl on Kang.

But it didn’t stop anything as the gator confidently stated, “Ha! It doesn’t scare me! I just want to teach him a lesson,” He then lunges and throws a punch at Kang’s face.

The dragon swiftly dodged as the gator took another swing with his other fist. However, Kang knew martial arts, and in a split second, moved out of the way before grabbing the gator’s arm in a tight grip, hitting him in the abs with his knee to weaken him, before holding on to his arm and spinning him around to throw him back towards the rest. The gator stumbled, before looking back, about to get back at him, before hearing the dragon roar.

“LEAVE ME ALONE!!!!!!!!!!” Kang said, his once timid nature, now having been overshadowed by a fierce, true dragon's anger.

Just then, he heard someone clear their throat from behind him. Kang turned around to find Mr. Seigfried.

“Mr. Kang! Just what do you think you are doing??” The dog said with a glare.

Kang’s eyes widened at being caught, as he immediately felt guilty. “I... they... they were trying to mess around with me, and I... I fought back, I am sorry.”

Then the husky shouted up, “He hurt our friend here, hit him with his knee, you should call campus security and get this dragon evaluated!”

The gator added, “Probably some Korean terrorist, you might need to keep an eye on!”

Mr. Seigfried turned to the husky and the rest with an upset look, “Don’t tell me what to do, I will decide how I want to handle this! You four, get out of here, I want a word with this dragon alone.”

The four were gone in a matter of seconds, as Kang could hear them snickering. Proud that they had gotten him in trouble. Kang never felt more stressed as the dog walked up to him, and he began apologizing profusely, thinking it would save him.

“I’m sorry... I am really sorry... I didn’t want to, but I swear they did it. But I have no excuse... I am sorry... I am sorry, Mr. Seigfried...” He shut his eyes, scared to be yelled at, as he was hugged suddenly.

The dog pulled Kang in and hugged him tight, careful not to crush his wings. As Kang felt some tears hit him and he hugged back.

“I know what they did... you are fine, Kang. We all have our moments, and those idiots were not being kind to you. I saw them trying to pick a fight with you, I just wish I had been here sooner to prevent it.”

Kang sets his head on Mr. Seigfried’s shoulder, “I am sorry... I should’ve just stayed in my dorm. I didn’t mean for any of this. Am I going to get in trouble?”

“No. Absolutely not, they will be the ones getting in trouble, we absolutely do not tolerate that. We will report them and bring them to justice. But for now, let’s take a walk and cool off. I am not going to let anything else happen to you, you have my word.” Mr. Seigfried said as he pulled away with a genuine smile.

“Thank you, sir. Thank you.” Kang said, happy to have someone here who cared for him.

The two turned and began to walk around the field, and they talked. Mr. Seigfried asked about Kang's life in Korea and his plans for school. And Kang asks where he can go to find better groups of people.

The dragon really did want to make friends, he was tired of being left out and cast aside. He knew deep down that with no connections, college would become a miserable time, especially for an outcast like him. But he knew he could do it, as long as he did his best to avoid those types of people earlier, he would be fine. And from that, hopefully, he would find that this place isn't so bad.

It was going to take some work, but he came from a family with good morals and a great work ethic. He had every capability to be the dragon he wanted to be. And even though it was going to take time for Kang to break out of his shell, he was determined to let his scaly self be shown as the spectacular red dragon he truly could be.