“There, right there, Bal.” Bal nodded as two dragons carried a flag past him, one bearing an insignia that looked like two dragons crossing over a shield. It was a symbol he’d come up with himself - since the Changing the dragon clans had been discordant, fighting one another in the confusion following such a change in power, and Bal had been the one to unite them under one common flag. While he would have liked to believe it was due to his charisma, the fact that he was close to 50ft tall and built like a tank might have had more to do with it. The clans were aimless, struggling for power, and he had shown them plenty of that. Of course there were quite a few that thought this hierarchy was tenuous, and wished to challenge it in any way they could - who was Bal to stop them? After all, a leader should show his strength, and Bal had plenty of it to show. The few that had gone against him so far had been pitifully weak, even with some of the powers the Changing had granted them. A turn of the world giving powers to all dragons, so many and so varied that there seemed to be no end to them, and yet Bal had received one of the most promising - the ability to drain the strength of others through touch. Many of the abilities fell into one of a few categories, but absorption ones were notably rare and often only bestowed on some of the most powerful dragon leaders. Considering the strongest dragons from across the land were here, he expected to see quite a few of them.

“My lord, the arena is ready.” The dragon before him bowed deeply, Bal nodding his head and gesturing at him to stand.

“Good job, Bal. You’ve been indispensable.” He nodded at the dragon, who did the same back before taking his leave. He made a mental reminder to reward him later - much of this was set up by members of what had once been his own clan, before he had ascended to the ruler of many others. He still knew most of them by name, and while he tried not to show any preferential treatment he couldn’t deny he’d given the more important jobs to dragons he knew he could trust.

“Only right, Bal.” He shook his head and went to inspect the arena. It was one of several he’d set up in order to accommodate what would be the largest tournament to date, a contest of strength and skill. The prize was very simple - control of all the clans, the leader position. If anyone could beat Bal, they would take his place. The tournament would take place over several rounds, with contenders having to beat multiple opponents in order to earn the right to challenge him, and he would be watching over it to make sure things went according to plan. He didn’t anticipate too many rulebreakers though - the thing about dragons is that they love combat, the more honourable the better, and something like this would mean everything to them. None would be so foolish as to risk it on cheating - being caught wouldn’t just mean disqualification, but likely exile from their own clan in shame.

“Doesn’t look half bad huh?” Bal turned to see Batzz approaching, his grin as always wide and menacing. The black dragon was maybe half the size of Bal, barely coming up to his waist, but as leader of the former thunder empire he was brimming with the strength to match his confidence. Bal had heard rumours of his ability to absorb physical impacts and convert them into strength, an ability that had made him a formidable opponent to everyone he’d come across thus far, but he’d never actually seen it with his own eyes. Batzz wasn’t wearing his armour this time around, instead donning his usual cape on top of a shirt that barely seemed to fit him.

“Bal thinks you mean business.”

“Damn right I do!” Batzz pointed at the larger dragon, his grin widening. “You better keep that throne warm buddy, cause I’m coming for it! Bahaha!” He continued laughing as he walked away, back towards a group of dragons that looked suspiciously like they belonged to the Drum clan. Sure enough, on closer inspection there was Drum, chatting with fellow contestants while working on his ram. Another contender that he had been keeping an eye on, Drum was able to absorb energy in the form of heat, whether that be through energy or just simple body heat, he could take it for himself. It was a strange ability, one that required an eclectic mix of close-range fighting and proper distancing, a skill that was as demanding as it was powerful. Drum had spent all his time mastering it, stopping at nothing to perfect his new style, and the results were clear. If there was a dragon that Bal was worried about even more than Batzz, it was Drum. Of course, there were others around that had just as much potential, but none of the others knew Bal’s fighting style as intimately as those two.

He couldn’t resist walking over to them, making sure to walk slowly and purposefully to make his approach that much more intimidating. Drum noticed him but didn’t show any fear, just watching the larger dragon walk up. Unlike Batzz - who was on the larger side to begin with - Drum was average sized for a dragon, which meant Bal absolutely towered over him.

“Bal was hoping to see you here.” Bal said, not bothering to lean down to make himself easier to hear - he wanted to boom, and boom he did.

“You set all this up and thought I wouldn’t come?” Drum smiled, polishing the valves on his ram as he did. “I spent the past year training as hard as I could, and now I finally get the chance to put it all to use.”

“Bal hopes it was worth it.”

“Guess we’ll see.” Drum returned to his ram, pulling out a small screwdriver and wiggling it into one of the many crevices of his weapon. Bal was amused at his defiance, but with a tournament to oversee he didn’t have time to push the dragon further. They would have to meet in the ring, and he would wait for it eagerly.

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Batzz stretched as he walked towards the arena. He wasn’t expecting anything particularly threatening in the first few rounds, but he’d come here to win, and he wasn’t about to lose by underestimating who he was against. No matter the opponent he was going to crush them, no mercy, no messing around. In the past he’d let his ego get the better of him, but instead of becoming humble he’d chosen the harder path of backing it up with strength. He did have to do a double take when he saw who was on the other side of the arena though, because it was a dragon he recognised.

“Garga.” He grinned as he saw the green and white dragon standing there, waiting patiently. Batzz might have been 20ft tall but Garga was just about the same height, maybe even slightly taller. “And here I thought this would be a pushover.”

“We shall see.”

Batzz just chuckled at that, stretching and waiting for the bell to begin. As soon as that note rang out he lunged forwards, laughing the whole way as he went to strike the first blow. He got halfway across the ring when Garga met him with a blow of his own, neither choosing to block. Except while Garga barely moved from the blow Batzz was blasted backwards at high speed, grunting in pain as his body registered the power of the blow. He planted his feet and skidded in the dirt, grimacing as the pain hit him and he felt his bones shift uncomfortably.

“Well well, you’re stronger than you look.” Batzz was grinning as he felt power curl through him - this was a matchup that could only go his way. Garga was ready and waiting, choosing not to talk but rather focus on the fight, but they could both see that Batzz’s power was already beginning to activate. The dragon grinned as his body began to swell larger, already impressive muscles pulsing to even larger heights. Usually it took him a little while to begin absorbing strength on this level, but Garga had hit him with enough force to kickstart it already, much to his delight. He silently compared their physiques in his head, noting how he was thicker around the arms and torso - his growth was more focused around the impact point, which had been his chest. The two of them had started this fight almost eye to eye, but now Batzz was slowly pushing upwards, at first just about able to look over Garga’s head, and then after a few seconds tall enough to look down on him. Garga was undeterred though, once more settling into his stance and readying for the onslaught.

This time you could *feel* Batzz charging forward, like the air was being slammed out of the way. Garga didn’t even flinch as the dragon came rushing head on, again meeting him and delivering a blow of his own right to Batzz’s chest. This time the larger dragon didn’t fly back nearly as far as before, his heavier body proving harder for Garga to impact, and he grinned as he found he could shake off a blow that would have had him wheezing on the ground before. Garga’s eyes widened as he saw the growth in such a short amount of time - already Batzz was just as muscular as he was, albeit without the unnatural strength in his limbs, and he couldn’t help but feel intimidated at the size of those muscles and what they represented. Batzz wasn’t done growing either - again the blow was converted into strength, again he grew taller and wider. The growth was more or less proportionate, but it kept the same proportions that Batzz started with, and the dragon was already heavily muscular. Again he moved forwards, and this time he towered over Garga - the dragon known for his size found himself completely outmatched in terms of sheer force. When they met, not even his full power was enough to get the dragon to alter course, his fist slamming into Batzz but not stopping him.

“Already?” Garga pushed as hard as he could, and while he was making ground he could feel himself slowly losing the upper hand. It was excruciatingly slow, he could feel every inch being harder to gain, every millimetre being fought for as the scales tipped, until agonisingly slowly he found he could push no further. The pair were locked in exact balance, and as Batzz looked his foe in the eye they both knew what that meant. Great slabs of muscle flexed and rippled, and with an almighty shove Batzz began to push his foe backwards. Garga wasn’t holding anything back but it didn’t matter, the time when they were equal had passed and now Batzz was in control.

The pair of them locked hands, wrestling intently whilst staring eye to eye, but Garga could feel that his own strength was quickly growing not just lesser but dangerously inadequate: Batzz’s grip was tighter, his attacks more aggressive, and Garga found himself having to switch stance just to keep him at bay. The punches that had once glanced off his scales now hammered into them with enough force to lift his feet off the ground, Garga wincing as all he could do was block the vicious onslaught. Worse still the black dragon was making full use of his stolen size, forcing Garga into awkward angles only made possible by the now sizeable height gap between them. With Batzz enjoying a 25ft tall body compared to Garga’s 20ft, the green and white dragon was forced to lean backwards and push back at an awkward angle. Batzz was just too big, too strong, too overwhelming. The awkward position didn’t help, meaning Garga was forced into one last desperate play. He reached deep down for that power, let it rise burning to the surface, felt it rage through him like a torrent of fire. The blow he planted in Batzz’s gut was biblical, an uppercut so viciously powerful that it knocked over all the other contestants in a mile radius. Batzz absorbed much of the impact almost instantly but the force was too much to fully neutralise, despite the almost instant growth from the hit. Even at twice the size of his opponent Batzz felt his feet leave the ground, almost 30ft of scaly muscle and sinew forced into the air. However whilst it did catch him off guard Batzz was able to improvise an albeit messy solution - holding onto Garga’s fist so that instead of flying away he pivoted around the dragon in a neat arc. Garga could do nothing as Batzz landed behind him with an almighty crash, his arm held behind him and then pressed against his back as Batzz pulled him into a headlock. The titanic bicep pressing his throat in was bad enough, but Batzz had kept his arm locked as well, meaning with enough pressure it would tear his shoulder. Worse still Garga was a good 10ft shorter now, meaning his feet were pedalling uselessly in the air as Batzz held him aloft - he couldn’t find any leverage like this. The arm holding him in place was so thick it was almost the size of his torso, a titanic girder of muscle that rippled without him even flexing, and exploded with size when he did tense up. Garga’s own arm looked like a noodle next to it, and that was saying something considering his own strength. Batzz didn’t have the strength to actually do damage or tear ligaments, but it was awkward enough that it meant Garga had no way of slipping the hold, no way to fight back.

“I think the words you’re looking for are *I yield.*” Batzz said it into Garga’s ear, tightening his hold as hard as he could, muscles like steel cannonballs exploding with size as all that strength was focused down.

“Gah, I yield!” Garga gasped a sigh of relief as Batzz let him go. Standing back facing him again he was able to appreciate just how much size the dragon had gained in a short period of time - Batzz was significantly taller now, with Garga’s head reaching just under the larger dragon’s chest. Not to mention Batzz looked much more muscular than before, his body thick with strength underneath those scales. “Not bad.” Garga mused, nodding approvingly.

“Just wait. You think this is big, this is just the beginning.” Batzz chuckled as he walked off, eager to get to the next round.

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Unlike Batzz, Drum didn’t have the same zealous confidence, that same hunger for a fight. Time and responsibility had mellowed him out somewhat, and being the leader of the clan had instilled in him a patience that gave him a slow and methodical fighting style, one that required careful analysis of the opponent. The good news was that his opponent was a dragon he was all too familiar with: Jack, better known as Jackknife dragon, was very much an old friend. The pair of them had sparred in the past, which meant they both knew the other’s power, and both were roughly the same height at a reasonable 6ft tall. The bad news was that because of this history Drum knew his opponent was a bad matchup - Drum’s power was the ability to absorb heat and energy, and Jack was able to create ice. Drum’s ability was more specific than Batzz’s, which meant it was a lot more powerful in order to compensate, but that didn’t matter if there was no heat to take.

“Bad luck already. Typical huh.” Jack chuckled as he readied himself, Drum doing the same on the opposite side of the ring. The pair of them were of similar builds, something that meant they were typically evenly matched - Drum didn’t expect it to stay that way for long if had anything to do with it.

“Eh whatever you want to call it, I ain’t letting you off easy.” He grinned, that fervour for battle reigniting as he felt his heart quicken, the blood pumping through his veins in preparation for what was to come. He was expecting Jack to hold his distance, and sure enough when the bell rang the first thing he did was to blast twin streams of ice right at him. He ducked down but of course Jack had his patterns memorised, and Drum found himself caught off guard as the ice suddenly exploded outwards and slammed into his side. Jack couldn’t change the direction of the ice but he could move his arms and flex it, the result being he could cause certain sections to detonate if he followed the right structure and moved at the right time. Drum was instantly on the back foot as he felt a bone-chilling cold enter his body. He knew from experience that this was the real issue - Jack could generate ice cold enough to freeze blood, and he would slowly become unable to move if he kept getting hit by it. He needed to get in close, where he would have the advantage, and so when Jack fired the next blast he went underneath it, feeling the icy wind scythe over his back as he dove forwards.

“Not this time!” Jack formed a fist, ice enclosing it until he had what looked like an icy sword at the end of his arm, and when Drum was close enough he swiped at just the right angle to catch him on the side. Only Drum was ready, and instead of the blade cutting into his stomach he was able to jump over it, the ice swinging harmlessly underneath his feet. Jack didn’t have time to adjust, the momentum of his swing locking him up for a second, and that second was all that Drum needed. He grabbed a hold of Jack, pulling him into what looked like a bear hug, only this had sinister intentions. Drum’s power was absorbing almost any kind of heat, but that also included natural body heat. Jack’s exterior might have been cold as ice, but to maintain his power his body was hotter than normal to protect his body temperature from dropping, something that Drum knew he could take advantage of. He was hugging like this to maximise the contact, ensuring he could absorb as much as possible in the short space of time that he had. In the few seconds of contact he managed to absolutely explode in size, going from 6ft all the way up to 10ft. It wasn’t just height but muscle too, his body thickening instantly and overwhelming his opponent as his grip tightened and his arms slid across Jack’s back. He was almost too strong for Jack to break the contact, but the now smaller dragon was quick thinking and created a wall of ice in front of him, forcing Drum back. He thought it would buy him enough time to back off and get some distance, but he’d underestimated just how much stronger Drum was after only a little bit of absorption - there was an almighty crash as Drum came charging right through the ice wall, breaking it apart like it was nothing.

“Dammit!” Jack scrambled back but Drum was too fast, too powerful. He even ignored the icy blast that Jack fired into his chest, tanking through it in order to make contact once again, to let that sweet flow of power commence yet again. He knew Jack wouldn’t be expecting himself to be surpassed already, and sure enough the dragon looked shocked at how big Drum was, staggering back and trying to regain his composure. It was almost instinctual, that fear one got from seeing an opponent that was so obviously stronger, and it was an instinct that Drum often took advantage of as he moved in close, using that fear to slip past Jack’s guard. Drum didn’t really steal size per se, but nevertheless Jack could feel himself growing weaker as his body temperature dropped, as his energy was sapped away and added to the now 14ft dragon holding him hostage, 16ft, 18ft… There was no way to break away now, the power gap was too high. He was struggling against muscles that were as large as his torso, huge boulders of strength fuelled by his own heat, his own power turned against him in the form of rock - hard biceps and a chest like a cliff face. Drum knew exactly how to use his strength as well, having been in this position many times before - he forced it into a pure strength contest, locking hands with the smaller dragon and forcing him to push just to not be crushed against the ground. Jack used every last ounce of strength he had, and it was still nowhere near enough to make one iota of difference, it was simply the faintest breeze of resistance as Drum pushed him downwards, folded him into the right shape so that he could squeeze their bodies together, so that Jack could feel the scales rubbing against him as he was hopelessly outclassed and only growing more inferior by the second.

Drum didn’t let him go until Jack’s teeth were chattering and his whole body looked a sickly pale colour. By that time he was close to 25ft tall, so high up in the air that he had to crouch down just to talk with Jack.

“I think I got this one, huh buddy?”

Jack sighed, trying to rub some warmth back into his limbs. “You didn’t need to take so much.”

“The more I get from you, the more I’ve got to use against Bal.” He helped Jack up, stretching arms that were thicker than tree trunks. “I’m not here to lose, and your strength will make sure of that.”

“You think?” Jack just looked up, the fact he had to crane his neck backwards proving his point for him.

“I know it.” With determination in his eyes, he walked out the ring and onto the next challenge.

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Batzz sighed as he walked past several other rings, each one with various combatants fighting each other. He wasn’t impressed by any of them really, most were much smaller than him and the ones that matched him were slow and lumbering, lunks with little brains. Batzz prided himself on his fighting skills, and seeing power wasted irritated him more than he cared to admit. Truth be told he had no interest in fighting any more useless contestants before the big prize, and that was why he was currently walking past them all. Bal was somewhere here, and he intended to skip the preliminary fights and go straight to the big boss.

“You’re still as hot-headed as ever.” Batzz turned to see Drum leaning against a wall. His first reaction was to grin - seeing that Drum was approaching his own size meant the dragon had won his first match convincingly, and considering he was here they probably had the same idea.

“Not bad. Still got a little way to go, but hey you’ll get there.” Batzz chuckled as he made sure to look down at Drum, still taking advantage of the 5ft height difference between them.

“He’s much stronger than you are, plus he’s a bad matchup for you. Most of his attacks are energy based.”

“And?” Batzz snarled grumpily. “Ain’t gonna matter when I start hitting him in the face.”

“You’ll be lucky to even get that close. He’s twice your size and several times stronger, you’ll be face-down in the dirt before you even get close.”

Batzz turned to face the dragon fully, walking up with a scowl across his face. “And I’m guessing you’ve got some grand idea that’s gonna make it all better?”

“We team up. You take the hits, I deal with the flames. Between the two of us we cover all the bases.”

“And what makes you think he’s gonna take a 2 on 1 so easily?”

Drum grinned. “I know Bal. I know his ego’s almost as big as yours, and his power’s only made it larger. He wouldn’t back down from a challenge no matter how difficult, and this is no exception. We go to him and challenge him, and that pride won’t let him say no.”

“Well aren’t we confident. But what happens if we win? There’s only room for one on the throne.”

Drum shrugged. “We’ll figure that out later. We can always fight for it if push comes to shove. So what do you say? We got a deal?” He held his hand out, but Batzz was hesitant. “Come on, the great Barlbatzz is afraid of a little handshake?”

“Alright fine then!” Batzz accepted the handshake with a little more vigour than was necessary, perhaps testing Drum’s strength a bit. If Drum was intimidated he didn’t show it, the pair of them equally matched as they shook hands. Batzz didn’t notice the slight heat drain until Drum’s grip tightened, and his eyes widened as Drum’s head grew level with his own.

“The hell are you - “

“Just putting us on even terms.” Drum chuckled as he let go, finally looking at Batzz eye to eye. For once the black dragon looked surprised, if only for a second, and the smile never left Drum’s face as he smugly enjoyed the little power boost. Batzz wasn’t deterred though.

“You’re lucky I’ve got power to spare. You better not slow me down!”

“I wouldn’t worry about that.” Drum chuckled as he led the way to the very end of the camp. The arenas were dotted around but Bal was waiting in the largest one of them all, a great construction with him looking down onto the main stage. Being specially built for this it was larger than the others, mostly to accommodate the titanic orange sun dragon currently sitting on his throne inside it. Drum and Batzz were forced to walk right into the main arena, past the guards that were 10ft tall and not about to attempt to stop either of the walking mountains breezing past them.

“You’re early, Bal.” The voice that rang down was deep and intimidating, and the pair of them looked up to see Bal looking down at them, arms crossed over his titanic chest. “Bal wasn’t expecting anyone until the next few rounds were done.”

“Yeah well we skipped them. Not like any of them were a challenge anyway.” Batzz grinned as he strode forwards, confident as ever. “Is your highness gonna come talk, or is he too afraid to come down and have a chat?”

Bal’s response was to stand up from his chair. The arena was structured much like a gladiator arena, meaning Bal’s little section was high above the arena floor looking over it all, a good 40 ft high or so. There were probably stairs or some reasonable way to get down, but Bal opted instead to jump over the edge, landing on the arena floor with an almighty crash and a huge cloud of dust. Both Drum and Batzz staggered backwards a little as several tons of dragon shook the floor, and when Bal stood up they were able to really see just how big he was, how impossibly muscular. Bal was built in a way that neither of the two smaller dragons could even begin to approach, a body that was thicker than should be possible and absolutely bursting with strength in every area. It wasn’t just the 50ft height that allowed it all to be displayed, it was the fact that just one of Bals’ arms had more muscle than Batzz did in pretty much his whole body. Each leg was like a swollen tree trunk, muscles overlapping as they fought for space on his body, what should have been elegant teardrops of sinew instead looking like crude slabs of raw power wherever it was possible to have them. Watching him stand up to full height was like watching some titanic construction being raised, like a building being assembled - they could almost hear the rumble of strength they couldn’t imagine as Bal reached his full, intimidating height and looked down at them like they were insects.

“Bal doesn’t think you’re here to chat.”

Batzz didn’t show a hint of fear as he looked up at Bal, looking tiny next to the titan. “No, we’re not. Look, you could wait another few hours for us to go through this whole tournament, or you could fight us both right here and now, 2 on 1. We win, we get the grand prize, you win and you get to knock out two of the most promising candidates. You fight us both at once.” Batzz grinned before delivering the last line. “Unless you’re afraid?”

Those words were like fuel on the fire, the match igniting the gasoline. They watched as Bal seemed to almost double in size, his body tensing as all that strength began to show, all that power locked away came to the fore. The air seemed to grow heavy with heat, waves of it flowing off Bal as he charged up, as the ground seemed to blacken around him.

“Bal accepts.”

The ground seemed to shake as Bal launched himself forwards. The dragon was so incredibly fast he seemed to vanish, reappearing between Drum and Batzz and striking the ground where Batzz had been just a moment ago. Despite his power Batzz was forced to dive out the way, the force of the impact helping him along by blasting him to the side. His eyes widened as he saw the molten crater in the ground, the sand literally melting as Bal turned up the heat and flames enveloped his body.

“Ahah, I knew you wouldn’t let me down! Gahaha!” Batzz dug his feet in and ran forwards, intending to duck under the first punch that Bal looked like he was going to throw. Bal held the illusion right until the last second, letting Batzz commit to the punch until he couldn’t abort it, and only then did he reveal the feint. The black dragon could only watch as Bal crouched down under the punch, gathered his strength for a second, and then unleashed it into his chest with everything he had. The difference in power between them had never been more apparent as Batzz got a glimpse of Bal’s arm next to his own, well over 50 inches of rock hard muscle making his arm look like a twig in comparison, slamming into his chest and digging into his pecs like they were made of tissue paper. One moment he was in the middle of the arena, the next he was slamming into the furthest wall at a crazy speed. Batzz only had a second to gather his bearings as a stream of fire came blasting towards him, and he ducked just in time for it to melt the wall he had been stuck against just a moment sooner.

“You gonna stand there and watch or what?” Batzz yelled to Drum, who was still a little shocked at the speed and power of their foe. He sprung into action, leaping forwards only to be met with a wall of heat. Bal focused it down into flames that were so hot they were almost solid, a wall of fire that pushed Drum backwards. He could feel his absorption kicking into gear but before he could get anything significant Bal hit him hard enough to send his head slamming into the ground. He rolled aside to avoid the clawed foot that would have pushed him further into the dirt, but was unable to avoid the subsequent uppercut that lifted him off the ground. Bal hit with such obscene force it felt like his whole skeleton was rattling in his body - all his strength and he was nowhere close to Bal yet, not even in the slightest. Being 20ft taller meant that Bal could leverage all of that size to its maximum potential, taking advantage of Drum being unable to even reach his chest and sporting not even a third of the muscle. It was like being hit by a truck, literal tons of muscle ragdolling him across the arena. He got to his feet wincing, feeling the effects as pain wracking his body.

“Bal expected more of a challenge, hah!” The sun dragon gave an exaggerated yawn, stretching as he did so. “Let Bal know when he needs to start actually trying.”

Drum was suddenly pushed aside as Batzz came charging forward. The dragon was bigger than before - closer to 40ft now and much more muscular, just from absorbing that one punch. When the two clashed the noise was deafening, two titans shaking the ground and sending shockwaves rippling through the air.

“Soft.” Bal grabbed hold of one of Batzz’s arms, squeezing and compressing the muscle with little effort, comparing it to his own arm that was as hard as diamond. He made sure to flex as well, rubbing in the strength difference as much as possible.

“Small.” Still holding onto the arm he lifted Batzz into the air, pulling him into a headlock that let one of those immense biceps occupy the nook underneath his chin, filling it entirely and not even letting Batzz drop his head into it.

“Weak.” An enraged Batzz scrabbled desperately at the arm around his neck, but it was like trying to uproot an oak tree with his claws. Even Bal’s forearm was corded with so much muscle it was thicker than Batzz’s shoulder in places, a huge wedge of strength currently pinning his throat closed.

“It’s so, so easy, Bal.” Bal laughed as he dropped Batzz, who barely had time to gasp for air before Bal hit him in the stomach. His fist sunk deep into Batzz’s chest, so deep the fist almost disappeared as his abdomen simply folded around the overwhelming strength, but despite the yelp of pain Batzz didn’t try to dodge it. He was instead grimacing as Bal fired punch after punch into him, somehow holding on and giving his power enough time to work. Bal hadn’t figured it out yet, meaning Batzz just grinned as he felt himself slowly inch upwards, as he felt that power in his body grow larger by the second. He relished the feeling of muscles thickening, of Bal’s punches feeling lighter and easier to take with each one that thundered into him.

“What’s the matter, that all you got?” Batzz grinned as his goading earned him another couple of punches, pulsing upwards until he was at Bal’s chest height.

“Bal thinks you might be strong, but you’re still not strong enough.” This point was proven as the pair of them locked hands and Batzz noticed he was still thinner than the sun dragon, and not by a small amount either. He found himself struggling to keep Bal off, his arms trembling with the strain. “Bal likes the way you tremble.”

The brief flash of anger across Batzz’s face was enough distraction for Bal to take advantage of, and the black dragon didn’t notice until he was blasted backwards with what looked like blue fire. This was hotter than before, and when the smoke cleared Batzz was wincing from the large patch of burnt scales on his chest. He was about to be hit with another one when Drum stepped in between, allowing the blast to hit him instead.

“This fire is ten times hotter than normal, even you can’t stand in its way Bal!” Bal grinned as he increased the pressure, blue flames cascading everywhere as the heat grew, but Drum stood his ground. Because of all the flames he couldn’t see what was happening underneath, see that Drum was slowly absorbing all that heat and converting it into pure strength.

“Mnnngh, that feels good! More! **MORE**!” His arms shivered and swelled from trunks to huge, pulsing girders, his chest exploded into a cliff-face of diamond hard pecs and chiselled abs, his legs thickened into colossal ham hocks that looked almost out of proportion, were it not for the equally insane sizes on the rest of his body. Bal also couldn’t see that Batzz was helping him along, firing his own energy into Drum’s back to speed up the growth. When he finally let the flames die down his eyes widened as he saw how large Drum was, how much strength he had gained.

“But that’s…” He didn’t have time to finish the sentence before Drum pounced. Ordinarily he would have swatted the dragon away like a fly but the size increase had thrown him off, and he allowed Drum to get in close. There was still a big gap between them in terms of strength and speed though, meaning that Bal simply caught Drum by the throat and held him aloft, grinning as he felt the heat spread through his body. Instead of struggling though, Drum grabbed hold of his arm with both hands, and tried to pry his fingers apart. At first Bal just laughed at the attempt, his grip like iron and Drum simply too weak to make any kind of progress, but after a few seconds Bal felt the strange sensation of pressure on his hand. He frowned as he tightened his grip but there it was again, that pressure he hadn’t felt in so long. He watched as slowly Drum pried his fingers open, flexing muscles like thick boulders as he managed to drop down. He didn’t have that far to go either - no longer was he at chest height, now he was very nearly equal to Bal, and certainly his build was just as muscular. Bal snarled as he threw a couple of blows, each one of them blocked by a more and more confident - looking Drum, and eventually when he tried to throw one Drum caught it. Another blow followed by another catch, and they were both locked hands staring each other down, pushing hard against each other. At first it was Bal pushing back his opponent, his body rippling and pulsing with strength as he forced the smaller dragon backwards.

“You really thought you were a match for Bal? Bal will crush you like a bug!” He laughed as he forced Drum down, but slowly he was finding it harder and harder. For the first time in the fight he paid attention to Drum, actually looked at him as an opponent rather than just another smaller dragon to crush easily, and what he noticed worried him. Drum was still growing - whilst they made contact he was pulsing larger and larger, slowly but surely approaching Bal’s size and by the looks of it possibly even growing larger. More importantly every last muscle in his body was swelling with size, great slabs of strength flowing across his arms and sliding down his chest, his body reinforcing itself with pound after pound of rock-hard power. Inch by inch he surged up past Bal’s collarbone, then his chin, then to the point where they looked each other in the eye finally. That moment where he could no longer compete came agonisingly slowly, like watching a car crash, but he could see his progress falter, waver, and then stop altogether. They were locked in perfect balance, shoulders and pecs and biceps all the same size, bodies tied in a dance for control. For the first time in months Bal found himself pushing against something that simply would not give. He felt an unfamiliar tremor in his arms, and it took him a while to place it - this was the feeling of being at his limit. It had been so long since anything had even challenged him, but right now he was looking at a dragon that was close to doing so. Looking directly at him too - they were eye level. Bal hadn’t been eye level with anyone since he’d obtained his powers, he’d been so far beyond everyone else it hadn’t been close, but now he was looking at someone that could actually challenge him. He looked down to see his own arms were the same size as Drum’s - impossible! There was no way this was possible when he’d started off three times the size, but the proof was in front of him. He could see muscles shivering with the strain, his body pushing itself to no avail as he tried desperately to prove his dominance, to show that the gap was still there. But it wasn’t anymore, and as he failed to make Drum move he was being forced to accept that. Some lowly insect posing this much of a challenge was inconceivable: already they were just about even in strength, and even his own absorption powers weren’t working. Why? What was he missing?

“Heat.” He said it out loud when he realised, a tone of surprise in his voice. “The fire earlier, my body heat. You absorb the temperature, don’t you?” Bal grinned as Drum’s smile faded, the dragon immediately tightening his grip to make sure Bal couldn’t break the contact, but it was too late: Bal broke out and planted a brutal kick right into Drum’s chest. The dragon went flying backwards, and Bal was about to follow up with yet another punch when Batzz blocked him. He saw the dragon was larger than before, and now that he was actually thinking about it the connection was obvious. “And you take the hits.”

“You don’t hit hard enough to call them hits, not now that we’re almost as strong as you. It’s only a matter of time before we break past that little gap and surpass you!” Batzz grinned as he went to trade blows, but Bal wasn’t having it, blasting him away with fire this time. Batzz came to a skidding halt, still wincing at the pain in his chest, but as he stopped next to Drum it was clear he was almost as large. Drum and Bal were both more or less the same size, and while Batzz was smaller than both he was slowly catching up. He only came up to Drum’s chest, but despite that he made up for it with a couple inches more girth around the arms and torso, his shoulders just a little bit wider. Drum had him beat in strength but not by much.

“Thaaaat’s it, keep em coming big guy. I’m gonna need as much of that strength as possible, heh.” Batzz chuckled as he inspected his body, comparing to Bal wherever he could. In some places he was already larger - his torso and pecs were definitely bigger than Bal's, his arms thicker around the biceps and triceps too, as well as the shoulders. Bal might have been bigger overall but Batzz was thicker, stockier around the middle and all over more muscular. Drum was even larger than Batzz, in fact he was just about the same size as Bal now, having leapt past even Batzz in terms of height, although he lacked some of the muscularity. He was eye to eye with the sun dragon, and looking a lot more confident than before. Conversely Bal was looking a little more worried - he still had the advantage, but it wasn’t as overwhelming as it had been just a few moments before.

“This is as far as you go, Bal. No more tricks.” Bal cracked his knuckles, the sound like gunfire in the tense air. “Bal will crush you like the insects you are, once and for all.”

Drum cursed under his breath. He’d been hoping to have more time, but now that Bal had figured out the secret the growth was done. Even at the same height as Bal that didn’t guarantee his victory, the sun dragon had the advantage of strength and more importantly knowledge. Batzz had too far to go to be useful, meaning it was essentially one on one. He would have to take this size and run with it: there were no other options. Except…there was one more. He looked at his partner, at all that juicy size. Two weaker dragons might fail, but one bigger dragon on the other hand…

“You’re almost right.” Drum stepped forwards, Batzz following just behind. Now that Bal had figured out how they grew they had little chance of growing enough to overpower him, and he needed more size as soon as possible. “The two of us probably can’t beat you. However one of us might.”

“What do you - *UUUUNNNNGHHHHH!!!”* Batzz groaned as Drum suddenly turned and enveloped him in a bear hug. The black dragon was caught completely off guard, too shocked to even push Drum off, which meant that he was powerless as Drum’s absorption started up he began to swell with strength. Cold washed through him as his body heat was suctioned out, and worse still his power was taken from him as well. He could only watch as Drum’s body instantly swelled up against his own, muscles rippling larger as they fed into the living tank that was Drum. The larger dragon’s already obscenely large biceps exploded even larger, as his shoulders pushed past cannonball and into beach ball-sized territory. The growth actually had a path too, Batzz could see as his strength gathered in Drum’s arms and hands first, going from forearm to bicep to shoulder, rounding around the deltoids before starting to spread across the dragon’s chest. It didn’t seem possible for Drum to get any bigger but somehow he did, his chest pulsing into two gargantuan boulders of absolutely solid muscle - Batzz could feel his own body moulding around them as Drum pulled him in tight, his body heat dropping rapidly as it was used as a conduit to take his power. Only when Drum’s torso was twice its previous size did the growth go lower, targeting his legs and bulking those up too. Batzz groaned as the cold sensation washed through his legs, his knees buckling from the feeling. He would have fallen to the ground if Drum wasn’t holding him up, but that was only going to last as long as he had heat and strength to give, and considering how he felt right now that wasn’t going to be for very much longer. He hadn’t even noticed that Drum had grown taller as well - no longer constrained to a mere 50ft, he was now closer to 70ft and utterly mountainous, a literal wall of strength so great that even Bal was looking at him in admiration.

You…bastard…” Batzz groaned as the loss of heat caused him to pass out, and Drum dropped him unceremoniously. Gone was the camaraderie - now his attention was focused on the strength, and everything that came with it. He flexed, and the display was effortlessly dominant, muscles practically rumbling as they came together with godlike force.

“Ohhh Batzz, don’t worry buddy. You’re much more useful like this.” Drum flexed harder, and *harder,* and ***HARDER***, each time forcing his body to display every inch of strength, the insane potential all forced to the surface. Every time he thought he was at his limit there was more, biceps and quads and pecs all blowing larger whenever he wanted. “Ohhh, the **POWER!** Ohhh, it’s incredible!” He turned to Bal, who instinctively took a step back. “What was it you said? I’m going to crush you like the insect you are?”

Bal’s response was drowned out as Drum charged. Instantly from the first contact the strength difference was apparent, Bal struggling to even block the ferocious punches and blows. It was like being hit with a planet, each fist powered with what felt like cataclysmic force into anywhere they could reach. He responded in kind, throwing some vicious kicks of his own, but his eyes widened as he saw that instead of dodging Drum was just taking them directly, grinning as he swelled with each hit. **SMACK -** Drum’s chest swelled up past Bal’s the pecs expanding outwards until they were a good few inches wider and fuller, adding a couple of inches of height to make room for the size. **SMACK -** Bal’s arms were outclassed as Drum’s limbs thickened around the middle, making Bal’s arms look like thin twigs in comparison. Again he pushed upwards in height, just a little bit more but each time getting further and further beyond Bal’s height. **SMACK -** Bal was forced to look up as Drum began to loom over him, the extra few inches meaning the sun dragon only came up to his abdomen now. He made use of his increased size to push down on the now smaller dragon, laughing as he revelled in the power. Bal realised he was in trouble - Drum had taken Batzz’s ability as well as his strength, meaning he had no way to stop him. He bought himself some time with a heavy punch to Drum’s chest, blasting him backwards and letting him dash over to an unconscious Batzz on the ground. Drum had only taken the heat from his body, meaning Bal was able to place a hand on him and begin to take the abundant muscle that still corded Batzz’s frame, slowly shrinking him down. He only had a few seconds to work with as Drum picked himself up, enough to shrink Batzz’s arms down from huge, veined masses to flat limbs, enough time to deflate that massive chest and thin his thighs significantly. Batzz’s body shrivelled away as the muscle was ripped from him, his entire body seemingly deflating as it was all taken. Steep hills of muscle were reduced to gentle curves, the definition flattened out and the size removed as Batzz’s body was softened, as he went from hunk to well on the way to twink. Bal on the other hand experienced the opposite, his arms exploding into colossal, throbbing mountains of raw power, his chest swelling into two boulders of muscle that each looked like they commanded their own gravity, so large and powerful that Bal could barely see below them, such was the extent of their size. The ground underneath him cracked as he packed on 5ft of height and almost 200 pounds of muscle in a matter of seconds, the rush of strength so intensely euphoric he couldn’t help but flex as hard as he could. However he didn’t have enough time to really enjoy it as Drum rushed him again, resuming the brutal onslaught. The bit of strength he’d taken from Batzz just wasn’t enough to even the gap: even at this height he still just barely reached Drum’s chest when standing straight, and he was back on the defensive - he had no choice, any sort of counterattack would just feed his enemy more strength, and he’d be worse off. Since receiving his powers Bal had never been in trouble - every fight he’d fought since then he’d had the advantage of size, and no amount of planning could overcome that gap. But for the first time he was faced with a problem where his size wasn’t enough, where he had no option but to think. It wasn’t the easiest task while fending off blows that were powerful enough to shatter bone, Drum laughing and cheering as he enjoyed using all the strength he’d taken, but after a while he managed it. Whilst they had been in contact before Drum’s passive drain hadn’t been enough to slow him down, and although he had Batzz’s power as well now that only worked on hits, contact above a certain speed. Drum absorbed heat, but Bal realised that he’d grown more after he used the hotter fire - his growth was proportional to heat. The sun dragon could lower his own body temperature, which could slow down Drum’s ability, and with some focus he could intensify his own draining ability around his hands. If he could force it into a grappling contest he would have the advantage, as Batzz’s power wouldn’t work on simple holding and his lower body temperature would deny Drum the body heat he required to grow. It would require extreme concentration, but it was possible: he could take all that new strength and the fight would be his. It was a plan, and as he felt his ribcage flex painfully under the weight of yet another blow, he figured he didn’t have the time to think of another.

It took him a little while to focus himself, blocking numerous punches as he slowly focused his ability, letting the fire that warmed his veins dissipate away as he did so. He continued until most of his body was almost shivering, and his hands felt like red hot pokers with all the draining ability concentrated into them. He waited for Drum to throw the next punch, and instead of just barely blocking it he let it through right into his stomach. It sunk in deep, and he gasped as the air left his lungs, but it allowed him to grab hold of Drum’s wrist.

“What are you doing? You think you can beat me on strength? Like this? Bahaha!” Drum was brimming with confidence, oozing with it, and so even though he knew Bal was trying to turn this into a grapple he let it happen, he locked hands with the sun dragon and began to drain his body heat. Only he quickly realised it wasn’t going the way he thought it would - instead of draining strength from his opponent, he could see Bal somehow draining the strength from him instead.

“Impossible!” He flexed his power, tried to absorb every last little bit of heat that he could, but there just wasn’t enough to overcome Bal’s drain. He pushed as hard as he could, but he could see the trembles of effort in Bal’s arms slow down, then disappear altogether as new muscle reinforced them several times over. Just as Bal’s arms grew Drum’s shrank, the change in size directly proportional in both dragons, each inch perfectly represented as the inches slowly turned to feet, as the pounds of muscle began to pile up and one dragon began to look a lot beefier than the other. Drum pushed as hard as he could, utilised all the size he had while he still had it, and to his credit he managed to push Bal all the way back to the arena wall, forcing his back onto it and pushing him hard enough to crack the concrete. But he could also feel the resistance growing, and he could do nothing as Bal continued to grow, pushing past the 65ft mark and gradually catching up to his own size. His arms had been stuck in front of him this whole time, meaning he could see the way his arms seemed to ripple and then pull inwards, watch as the tree trunks he called limbs slowly melted away, his impossible musculature quickly becoming less impressive by the second. All the muscle that he’d been so proud of just moments before, now it was being copied by Bal.

“Did you really think you could beat Bal?” The confidence that had disappeared for a bit now returned, and it coincided with the tipping point - Drum pushed but found he could just not move the sun dragon. He was like rock, standing there with immovable weight, and worse still he could feel the weight growing. His arms and chest exploded with size as he strained with all his might, but he couldn’t stop the backwards progress of his body as Bal pushed back. For a brief moment they met eyes, exactly the same height for just a few seconds, and then fear ran through Drum as he found himself slowly having to look further and further up, as he found his arms that were once godlike now looked merely normal in comparison to the monstrosities of solid mass that Bal now sported. He was shrinking at the same time, which made the comparison feel doubly unfair, but all he had eyes for were the muscles, the huge, steel-like cords that wrapped around Bal’s arms and tightened over and over again, the pecs like living rock so hard that they could have crushed diamond.

“Feel that, Bal?” Bal pushed and now it was Drum’s turn to tremble, slowly forced backwards as his strength was taken. It wasn’t a fair contest anymore, in fact Bal was slowly going from fighting to just toying with his opponent, simply flexing his superior strength and waiting for Drum to accept it. He never would of course, but that just meant that Bal could lord it over him even more. “That’s what being weaker feels like, Bal. I’d get used to it if Bal were you, because you’re never getting past Bal. Bal will give you points for coming close, but now you’re lost. Accept it.” In a show of strength Bal switched to one hand, Drum forced to grab a hold of his claws with both hands just to stop himself being pushed backwards. Bal just yawned, making it look nonchalant as Drum strained with everything he had. “So easy, Bal.”

The fight - if it could be called that now - had to come to a close at some point, and with Drum effectively neutered Bal decided that time should be now. He was 85ft now, towering over everything and large enough that the other arenas had stopped their matches to see the monster eclipsing even the biggest of the arenas, the literal god amongst them. He leaned forwards and pushed Drum against the ground, holding his head to the floor and letting him struggle to get up.

“Do you yield to Bal?” He waited for the answer, and finally, begrudgingly, it came.

“I yield.”

Bal grinned. “No shame in losing to the biggest of them all, Bal. And Bal is staying the biggest.” He let go of Drum and threw his hands in the air, laughing and flexing as he did so. He was so titanic that he couldn’t help but show off - even when not flexing that body was a tableau of perfection, a living sculpture that would make any stonemason weep. 85ft of muscle and sinew, monstrous even when next to Drum’s still impressive 70ft body - being a good head taller than him made the difference seem larger than it was, especially when Bal was significantly beefier as well.

“Fuuuuuck you’re massive!” Drum couldn’t help but hold his own arm up to Bal’s, seeing how even when flexing as hard as he could his whole arm was still thinner than Bal’s unflexed bicep. “All that power, not an inch of weakness anywhere.” His hands roamed across that body, feeling the curves everywhere, the living armour Bal was wrapped in. “It’s amazing!”

“Bal agrees, but Bal doesn’t think he’s the only one that’s large. Bal recognises strength when he sees it, and while you’re never going to be the biggest, second place is still an achievement. Bal thinks you’re just as impressive in your own way.” Bal made Drum flex his own arm, and while it paled in comparison to Bal’s muscle it was still a beach ball-sized mound of perfect strength, a bicep that any other dragon would kill for.

“Yeah, I guess.” Even with the praise Drum looked a little dejected - understandably so, although he perked up when Bal kneeled down and flexed an arm in front of him. That bicep, thick and heavy with strength, bulging with mass, veins flashing across the surface as they were forced up by raw power… Drum had never seen anything like it.

“Bal sees your admiration. Do you want it?”

Drum nodded, and Bal gestured for him to take hold. Drum did just that, wrapping both hands around the bicep and squeezing, feeling the insane hardness of it but also feeling his draining powers starting back up. The strength that flowed into him was like fire, so hot it almost burned, and as muscle corded his arm he squeezed that bicep tighter and tighter, still marvelling at how it didn’t move an inch. The harder he squeezed the more he drained, the trickle becoming a river and then a flood of power. There was no height gain here - this was all muscle, all sheer power flowing into him like a warm tide, like fire roiling through his veins. As he tightened his grip he felt his confidence flow back, and now he wanted to see how long he could hold on, how long it would take until that rock hard muscle felt like putty in his grip. It felt like there was no end to the strength in there, like Bal was just flexing a limitless supply, but Drum was getting into it now and knew there had to be a limit. The harder he squeezed the harder Bal flexed, keeping his arm like iron and forcing the two of them into a competition that only grew more and more tense, Drum grinning as he felt his arms blow up and his grip strengthen even more. After a few seconds he finally felt what he was looking for - the muscle in his hands flexed inwards, just the tiniest amount but enough to let him know that he was making a difference, that the strength chasm between them was shortening. He felt it give more, felt his fingers tighten on the bicep enough to push it inwards slightly.

**ORIGINAL ENDING**

“Not too much, Bal.” Bal jerked his arm away, cutting off the drain, but the strength that Drum had taken was enough to push him way beyond anyone else besides Bal himself, enough to make him stronger than almost anyone else. Truth be told Bal had stopped the drain while he was still able to - a little bit longer and it wouldn’t have been his choice anymore, he’d have been inferior to Drum and things might have even gone badly. It was a game of chicken, but Bal had showed no fear allowing Drum almost back up to his own strength. “Bal thinks that should feel a bit better, hm?”

“Hell yeah it does!” Drum mirrored their flexing from earlier, grabbing Bal’s arm and putting it next to his own. Now they were damn near the same size - Bal had only a little bit more girth here and there, his shoulder slightly more rounded and his bicep and tricep extending further outwards on both sides. Even with both of them flexing as hard as possible Bal was noticeably bigger, but the gap between them was definitely not as far as before.

“Looks like I’m just as big as you are now!” Drum said with a grin, flexing again and bringing both arms down into a most muscular pose, just enjoying the sensation of his movement being restricted by muscle, squeezing it tighter.

“Not quite, Bal. Bal still bigger.” The sun dragon gave Drum a wink. “Bal is always bigger, but now you’re close.”

“Why though?”

Bal chuckled. “Bal wouldn’t find it any fun without some competition. Besides, Bal has been looking for a right-hand dragon, and you’re the perfect fit. You get strength, Bal gets a partner. Deal?” He proffered a handshake

Drum didn’t want to take Bal’s hand. Deep down he just knew he had the power to surpass the sun dragon, especially with Batzz’s ability on top of his own. All it would take was time, but for now the best way to get that time was to play along.

“Deal.” The two shook, and both exited the arena, one plotting the other’s demise. The title of king, despite all of this, would still be a contested one.

**ALTERNATE ENDING**

“More!” Drum gripped tighter, and in his confidence Bal didn’t see the danger right in front of him, he failed to notice that no longer was he strong enough to pull his arm away. He didn’t notice even when Drum’s fingers wrapped all the way around his arm, when Drum no longer had to use both hands to reach all the way around but instead was able to switch to just one. When he finally stopped being too arrogant to care, it was FAR too late - Drum was already almost even in height, and when Bal tried to pull himself away Drum’s grip was like iron, holding him in place.

“Rrrrgh, hold still! Gotta get alllll that size outta you!” Drum reached over and put a hand around Bal’s neck, stopping him from reaching forwards and lifting him up into the air in the process. The double contact only increased the growth, and Bal’s eyes widened as suddenly the arms that had been smaller than his own were actually the same size. He pushed the hand in his face away and was stunned to see the same muscle he’d grown accustomed to on Drum’s arm, their biceps matching in size and strength as they pushed against each other.

"This was your size? Wow, you really did try and lord it over me with just this, gotta admire the audacity. I’ll admit it does feel pretty good being as big as you, but I don't know, it feels a bit too small for me. I don't think this is where we stop little guy." Drum grinned as he amped up the drain yet again, and Bal felt despair creep in as Drum’s arm kept swelling, while his own remained the same size. The size gap widened by the second, and desperation gripped his movements as he tried everything to throw Drum off, to release his grip. His legs pedalled uselessly in the air as he was lifted further and further off the ground. At first the struggle between them was just that, a struggle, but as Drum packed on pound after pound of muscle that struggle looked more and more one-sided.

"Gotta admit I look good right? You weren't using any of this strength anyway, it looks much better on me. Hell, being bigger than you is a look I could get used to!" As Drum surged past 90ft and was on the way to 100, it looked more like he was holding up an angry toddler rather than the strongest dragon in the land. “What do you think, three times your strength? Maybe even four times, honestly it’s hard to tell the difference. It’s like trying to measure a millimetre, you know? You just don’t register anymore.” He wasn’t trying anymore, he was just taking strength for the sheer pleasure, and there was nothing that Bal could do about it.

“That should do it.” Drum let go of Bal finally, letting him drop to the ground with a pained grunt, and the result was staggering - the height difference between them was reversed, where Bal had once been 20ft or so taller than Drum, now the opposite was true and Drum loomed over Bal. He was a titan, so strong that he made Bal look thin in comparison. “Hah! Didn’t realise you were so small buddy! Might only be 20ft higher but it feels like I’m 20 times stronger. ”

“Give it back!” Bal made a swipe, trying to make contact again, but Drum held him off easily. The sun dragon was shivering from how much of his body heat had been taken, the cold doing just as much as the drain to sap his strength.

“Mmmmh, feels like…. 6 times stronger. Yeah, that feels about right. Besides, you should be used to being the smaller one by now, you used to be like this all the time! Haha!” Drum laughed heartily as he held off Bal with one hand, making it look trivial. “Well good news is you’re just about big enough to be my right-hand dragon. Bad news is I’m gonna be using you as a battery for a while, but I’m sure you don’t mind. Right?”

Bal wanted to object with every fibre of his being, but he knew that if Drum wanted he could just hold him down and take the strength anyway, so he just nodded meekly.

“Perfect! Well, let’s go! Kingdom isn’t gonna run itself.” Drum cheerfully walked out of the arena, Bal following closely behind, already plotting how to get back on top. Dejected, but not defeated.