

## Chapter 1: A Strange Rumor

The dawn of a new day came and went as the sun crept its way up past the horizon. Underneath the warm sunbeams lay a trio of critters soundly asleep, their curled-up forms pressing against the soft grass of the forest floor. The first sleeping bundle was Asher, a kind but timid dragon boy. The second was Sky, a cutesy unicorn-cat who was a rather curious girl. The last was Mocha, a chubby dwarf-panda who loved food as much as her friends. Together, they had been traveling across the landscape to see new sights and take in the many experiences life had to offer.

The forest was filled with a soft tune sung by the many birds nesting in the trees overhead. The song echoed about through the forest and landed in the ears of Sky, which caused them to twitch slightly. She stirred in her curled-up position underneath a tall tree, not wanting to wake up from her peaceful slumber. Sleep held no victory as her eyes sprung open and she slowly sat up with a big yawn. Thoughts of her journey flooded back into her mind as it clicked on for the day, which filled her with motivation. Sky and her friends had a mission ahead of them and she wouldn't let sleep be an early barricade.

"Hey guys, wake up! It's already close to mid-day." Sky shouted as she looked between both of her snoozing companions.

When shouting got no response, Sky rolled her eyes and got onto all fours. If she couldn't wake them up by shouting, then other means would need to be brought about. Sky went over to Mocha first, who had been laying on her back, her chubby belly rising and sinking with each breath. Sky took a paw and gently tapped at the panda's soft belly in an attempt to wake her.

"Get up sleepy, we can't waste any more time!" Sky grinned as she continued to poke the panda like it was a sort of game.

"Is it morning, already...?" Mocha asked without opening her eyes to check for the light of day. She began to sit up from her comfortable position, both paws used to rub her eyes until they grew accustomed to the daylight.

Sky let out a giggle and jokingly rolled her eyes, a smile growing on her face. The final companion to awaken was Asher, also one of the easier ones. She even had a plan in mind already, just block out his source of warmth and he would grumpily be woken from his slumber! Sky got over to where the dragon lay and stood over top of him so that her shadow encased the sleeping dragon's form. With the slight warmth gone, Asher's eyes opened and turned into a grumpy gaze as he saw the source of his disturbance, Sky.

"Hey there sleepy-head, it's time to get up, we have work to do!" Sky smiled brightly down at Asher who turned his head in protest.

“Please stop blocking the sunlight Sky. Us reptiles are cold-blooded and thus need as much warmth as we can get.” Asher wrapped his arms around himself and shivered to show just how cold it was for the dragon.

“Alright, alright. Just get ready to leave shortly,” she replied.

Sky then did as her friend had asked, only after giving him a light bap on the snout. With everyone now awake, she went back over to where she had slept and sat down to groom herself.

A warm breeze snuck its way into their makeshift campsite, which made Asher smile. He stood up and stretched while gazing out over the rocky cliff edge that hung over a forest below. “So, what are we doing again, Sky?” Asher asked as he took in the view of the forest before him and the grass-covered hills that lined the opposite side of the valley.

Sky paused her grooming session in mid-lick and looked up. “The last town we went to, the one with all the bratty kids, do you remember it?” She asked Asher as he continued to stare out over the edge.

“Yeah, what about it?”

“Well, I overheard a conversation between two of the parents. They mentioned something about a summer camp that their kids went to, and when they got back the kids were much calmer.”

“What do you think they meant by that?” Mocha asked as she looked up from her seated position on a stump.

“I have no idea honestly, I didn’t hear anything more than that which is why I want to go and check it out!” Sky spoke in a giddy tone and nodded towards Mocha who grinned and nodded back at her.

Asher wasn’t too fond of the idea once he heard it. Exploring the world and traveling around was fun, it could be dangerous at times too, but this was on a different level. It meant sneaking into someplace and potentially getting themselves into trouble. The boy had still been looking out over the valley but turned once he thought it over.

“I get that you want to help out and all that, Sky, but isn’t this a little bit too much? We would be butting into somebody else’s business when it’s not our place to do something. If anything is even going on at all.” Asher placed his paws onto his hips as he glared towards the uni-cat with frustration.

“Look, Asher, I understand your concerns but if people are worried about this place then surely we cannot just pass it by! What if something bad is going on and only we can fix it?”

Sky got up onto all fours and started walking towards the mountainside which sloped gently downwards. The soft grassy ground beneath her front paws and hind hooves cushioned

each of her light step's forwards. She paused near the beginning of the slope and turned around to look at her friends with a smile.

"We will go in, check everything out, and then leave. Easy and simple. We won't stay long enough to get into any real danger, besides, we are strong together." Sky spoke her final words before starting her descent down the mountain.

Asher gulped but nodded in agreement, she was right. He watched Sky from behind before her form vanished under the slope. Mocha had already begun to follow, and Asher didn't want to be left behind, so he ran to catch up with his friends.

The camp itself wasn't far from where they had slept for the night. It was near the bottom of the mountain and a sat close to a river than ran off out from it. All they had to do was follow that river until they reached a border where the forest stopped, and some grassy plains began. The camp was supposed to be around that area from what Sky had heard.

A half-hour long trek brought them most of the way down the mountain-side. Ahead was a clearing, the grass sprawling out in all directions and gently blending into the forest boundaries. In the center of the clearing sat several log cabins which varied in sizes. Opposite to the campsite was a slope that went downwards, further into the valley below.

The three of them had been watching the campgrounds for at least a few minutes in silence, resting from their hike. The faint sounds of crickets mingled with the birds chirping to bring about a nostalgic summer atmosphere. Asher decided to break the heavy fog of unnerving silence between them with a hushed tone.

"So how exactly are we going to investigate this place and not get caught instantly?" Asher asked as he turned to Sky and raised an eyebrow. "Three random young-adults snooping around in a camp is going to look rather suspicious, don't you think?"

"Oh, don't worry Asher, I've already thought of that!"

Sky grinned as she began to cast a spell, one that could be seen as a bright, pink glow at the tip of her yellow horn. The light grew brighter, bathing the three of them in it before a cloud of pink smoke overtook each of them. The smoke faded after a few seconds but once it was gone, they looked vastly different. Instead of three 21-year-old adventurers, there now sat three five-year-old kids. The spell also had a secondary effect as seen by the diapers now snugly wrapped around each of their butts.

"What the heck did you do to us?!" Asher squeaked as he frantically looked at himself and then at Mocha and Sky, seeing they too were now younger.

"I used an age reversal spell, only a physical one though. This way we can blend in with the other kids and not look like snooping adults, the perfect disguise! We will just tell them we

are last minute sign ups or something!” Sky giggled a bit and smiled at Asher who looked rather stressed.

“What’s with the diapers?” Mocha asked as she gently pressed a paw into the front of hers.

“Oh, that? It’s just a precaution in case the spell also affected our control over using the bathroom. It’s sort of a side effect that can come with it.”

Mocha blushed a bit as she could hear her diaper crinkle with even the slightest of movements. “Makes sense,” she muttered, fixated on the poofy garment.

Asher grumbled and frowned, looking very upset. This was not something he had signed up for and now it was just forced upon him without even being asked.

“Just...just turn me back Sky, okay? You and Mocha can go in there and do whatever you need to but leave me out of it. I will wait right here for you guys.” Asher didn’t just look grumpy, but he sounded it too, although it was hard to take his higher pitched voice seriously.

“Well, there’s a small issue with that, Asher. The spell takes up a lot of magic and I kinda used all mine up for it. It’s going to be at least a few days before I’m able to cast a reversal spell with how young we are. I have to regenerate enough magic for it, so for now, we’re stuck like this. Sky blushed and looked nervously at her friend who grew increasingly upset.

“I don’t really mind it,” Mocha spoke up. “It brings back memories to be this young and getting to go to a summer camp only adds to it.” She tried to shed some light on the situation, even if she too had doubts about the plan.

“Let’s just get this over with,” Asher grumbled through his gritted teeth, giving an angry glare towards Sky.

Sky nodded at them both and got off her crinkly butt. She stood up, along with her friends, and together they began to walk towards the campgrounds, leaving the safety of the forest behind them. They left the birdsong and the cricket chirps in the forest, their ears now filled with a new sound from the crinkling caused by their diapered rumps.