

Reforged
Written by Jaredin Snow (FA: Rakuenwolf)

Arrival

It was a cold and bitter night in the Aryks City outskirts which was currently gripped in the midst of brisk autumnal dark but above the sea of stars shone brightly and welcoming those below to stare at their evanescent beauty. From his living room window Jaredin looked up to the brightened full moon as it bathed the street in its ethereal light and gave the world a look of mournful remembrance for the summer that had been. The clouds from earlier parted and the rains gave the world an iridescent glow which only aided in bathing the world in the lunar light.

It was nothing short of spectacular, a rare event for these parts, or so Jaredin thought. It was, however, still really bloody cold!

“Well, at least it’s warm in here...” Jaredin muttered to himself as he drew the blinds slowly downwards; It was getting late and he needed to get to sleep. Whilst he had no work in the morning with the coming of the weekend he certainly wasn’t feeling up for a late night after the week he had; no he needed and wanted to have a nice long snooze.

He was not as young as he used to be - now in his late twenties and rapidly approaching thirty he found he was no longer capable of the grand feats of his youth such as all night gaming or drinking to the small hours of the morning, no sadly age had him come to appreciate the joys of a good night's sleep. Whilst he still retained some of his youthful looks the light bags under his eyes and his slowly growing waistline were adequate reminders that he was in fact getting old, with dignity granted, but old nevertheless and he had to take care of himself just a little bit more than in the past.

Going about the usual nighttime motions of ensuring doors were locked and lights turned off he turned into the ground floor corridor connecting the living room, kitchen, garage and study and was about to begin his ascend up the staircase to head to bed when he was stopped in his tracks by what sounded like the loudest boom of thunder he had ever heard.

So loud in fact that he jumped on the spot and clutched his heart in fright, hands clutching the bannister to his side. It sounded like something very solid had crashed with an almighty thud into something equally as solid and echoed throughout the house not too dissimilar to an explosion.

“What in the actual hell!?” he asked with a confused fatigue as his heart still raced, he turned his head back with a snap behind him to the door leading into the garage, the source of the sound as far as he was aware. For a moment he considered that perhaps something did hit his house, however it was just a sound the house hadn’t shaken itself to pieces like he would have expected if that was the case. Still as he calmed himself and composed his thoughts once more he knew he couldn’t well go to bed with this lingering doubt in his mind

Groaning in the fact that something awful might have happened and someone may need help he turned around and moved towards the garage door and slowly opened it to step inside.

Though to call it such would be a slight exaggeration, it was more a store room for old and disused equipment than it was anything else given the fact Jaredin did not in fact own a car. The large open space in the middle was indication enough of no vehicle ever having been stored here looking at the pristine concrete flooring with lack of spills or stains.

Otherwise some old computer bits sat in the corner and a toolbox decorated the farside whilst on the wall closest had a washing and drying machine which was the only actively used item in the room. There were some shelves on the back wall with various bits and pieces on it but nothing he really remembered specifically. More dust collection than anything practical.

Clicking the switch to his side the hum from the old fluorescent tube filled the room as much as the light it generated as Jaredin walked over to the large external door across the cold concrete, his bare feet twitching lightly at the sensation as he was immediately reminded of the cold evening once more,

“Should have put on a pair of shoes...” he muttered to himself under his breath and rolled his eyes at his own stupidity.

Having not heard or felt anything else since the extremely loud thundering sound he did question if he wanted to see what had caused it as any number of scenarios ran through his head; Car crash, helicopter crash...plane...crash? No, he thought he was being silly at this point, His curiosity got the better of him though in and the end and reaching down he clasped at the garage door and with a great heft pulled the shutters up and over as they loudly clattered into the ceiling

What he saw however nearly made him drop it again out of sheer surprise.

“What...the...hell” was all he could muster when confronted with the strangest and most esoteric sight he had ever seen...

In front of his garage door lying no more than five feet away was a large metallic looking...for use of a better word - dragon! It lay on its side unconscious, or deactivated. It was painted red and golden yellow with black parts between the plates. Jaredin was pretty sure too if it was standing it would have been going on 7 maybe even 8 feet!? Even laying down it was easy to tell this creature was...massive in all its proportions, built strong and built heavy whatever it may have been.

Jaredin was stunned and for a moment just stood there staring over it, examining the form over and over trying to make sense of it in his mind - this large dragon-like creature just lying in front of his garage like some kind of delivery.

The questions most prominently at the front of his mind were, however, just who put it there, why and, if it was alive, who was it? Was it some kind of armour or was it a robot of some kind? He knew there had been many advances in them but certainly nowhere near to the degree which he saw lying in his driveway!

“Ok, ok snap out of it” realising he was just standing there in the cold night as a brisk gust of wind brought him back into the moment he stepped down his driveway to see if perhaps this may have been prank, or if someone may have been watching from across the street like a practical joke or the like - however the street was empty of any kind of life that evening with not even the usual sound of wildlife filling the night air.

“Alright...alright....” Jaredin paced on back up to the slumped creature in his midst “So no one is around and this doesn't look like the rice cooker I ordered...” joking to himself in a vain attempt to relax he carefully knelt down in front of the creature and ever so lightly rested his hand on its snout to see if he could elicit any form of reaction.

Just cold, cold hard metal.

“No reaction...it's almost as if...” carefully examining it Jaredin looked for any sign of injury or damage, perhaps ‘it’ was hurt? It certainly looked lifelike though significantly more advanced than anything he had ever seen before. He carefully lifted its armoured arms and lifted its head gently to see if perhaps the chassis showed anything which might indicate wear and tear, nothing, it looked as if it was good order, at least externally.

“Are you alive? Are you...living?” he mused out loud rhetorically. Though he would admit if had answered he would have been happy to try and help it. If it was...alive then he would do everything he could even if this was...and he laughed internally as he thought of this, an alien lifeform.

No, no that couldn't be the case, he thought, however the evidence in front of him was overwhelming giving him pause for suggestion...

After spending some time examining the dragon Jaredin realised he could not just leave it out here in the cold. Whatever it was didn't deserve to just be left outside and if it needed help then he was not the kind of person to just let someone, anyone suffer - robot or not.

Plus it was not exactly a great lawn ornament and he could do with the neighbours not asking any silly questions.

This however, he surmised, brought up its own logistic problems such as how to move it. it was metal that was for sure, the cold feeling Jaredin got when he touched him told that much and he was heavy...that heft and plating itself must have weighed more than he did! Like more than a car! So just how would he get it from the driveway and into his home even over such a short distance

He mused on this for a few short before a smile crept across his face in the form of an idea!

“Hmmm...you are a heavy bugger ain't you?” grunting the significantly smaller human put the dragon's arm over his shoulder attempting to pick him up. His back strained heavily from the incredible mass as the creature's feet and tail dragged behind him but he did somehow manage to lift and start moving him even if slowly. “It's like...moving my washing machine all over again...except this time it's like ten times heavier...you...you are very heavy!” he laughed to keep out the pain as he slowly made his way back inside the garage. “You're the strong silent type eh? I respect that...keep to yourself, reminds me of someone I knew” he added, seeing the dragon's face next to his, the eyes black and dark showing no sign of stirring despite his poor sense of humour.

It took him a couple of minutes and his back throbbed from the experience but soon enough the dragon creature now lay against the back wall of the garage taking up a good amount of the space. Sighing and stretching out he looked down at him with a

soft smile "Sorry big guy, it's not the Ritz I know but...hopefully better than being outside. I hope you can forgive me"

Taking a deep breath as he closed the opened garage door he then looked around to see if he could find anything to cover the dragon with when he noticed something unusual...something he hadn't spotted until right now...the dragon's tail.

"Wait...what?" walking back over and kneeling down he gently picked up the end of the dragon's tail as the tip seemed to be the shape of...an electrical plug?
"Well...how did I not spot that before?" he cocked his head to the side as he held it in his hand before looking to the wall next to him which had, as luck would have it, an empty power socket. He silently mouthed a thank you for not having to move the dragon any further.

"It can't be that easy can it?" he asked himself as he dragged the tail across and slowly, with great care, plugged it into the wall with a satisfying click...
"Well...I'll be" chuckling gently he looked back at the dragon and pointed playfully
"You're lucky my electricity bills are cheap my friend!"

Stepping back and standing up he looked to see if it had made any change at all to the sleeping titan such as a charging light or a battery indicator; however it still remained totally unresponsive - no lights, no movement...nothing. "Well...I guess it was too much to hope for"

Ever reminded of the cold he looked back to his washing machine and found the duvet cover he had washed and dried the other day sitting on top in the basket pile to iron. It was a king sized one so it should fit over the dragon mostly...he hoped. Quickly stuffing the quilt back into it he then threw it on over the dragon - the blue and white stripes doing nothing for the dragon's colour scheme but it would hopefully keep him warm...Jaredin hoped anyway. His tail and feet pushed out from under it but there was little he could do for that.

He once more tried to gain any kind of reaction from the dragon by kneeling down and waving his hands in front of his face "Did that help? I hope you're not too cold?" but again no response. Sighing he shook his head and stood up, his eyes never once breaking away from the dragon.

"Listen...I...I hope you will be ok, I...I have no idea who or even what you are but...I'll do what I can to help just...just let me know if you need anything, alright?"

He could feel a pang of sadness in his heart for the creature imagining himself in his position - lost and alone in a strange world. He would be scared too...so if he could do even one small bit to help he would. The idea of this being an alien life form finding purchase in his mind, it was the only conclusion he could come to.

Before leaving Jaredin turned the heating on and stared back over his shoulder before switching the light off and gently pulling the door too.

“...Sleep well big guy”

Rubbing his forehead gently he made his way upstairs and tried to rationalise everything which had happened in the last 20 or so minutes in his head....a large metal dragon like creature was now...charging in his garage? Where did it come from? Who was he? Why did he turn up here? All the questions swirling in his mind and answers none too apparent. Hopefully when it finished charging it might be able to answer some of those questions...depending on how intelligent it was, hopefully somewhat otherwise he had no idea how he was going to help!

“Just where could something like that come from and...why am I not panicking more...odd...really odd” speaking to himself softly he crawled into bed on his musings as he reached over to his bedside lamp but hesitated for a moment and shook his head “No way am I sleeping well tonight...” and with a sigh clicked the switch before turning over and pulling the blanket over him as he fell slowly into a deep sleep as the questions slowly drifted to the back of his mind until the morning...

Awakening

The restless sleep was not to last however as he was shook awake suddenly with another loud BANG from below which this time shook the entire house. Jaredin awoke bolt right up from his bed clumsily from his dream and struggled to sit up as his elbow nearly gave out for a moment from the fright. He looked around in confusion, for a moment dazed about what had just happened.

“What!?” looking around he reached to turn on his lamp, clicking the switch but nothing coming from it...dead.

“Come on...turn on you idiot” he clicked it again, and then a third time - nothing, darkness. It was at this point he realised that the power must have gone and blown a fuse.

“Yeah, that must be it” he tiredly sighed as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

Groaning, he pulled himself out of bed, pulling on his dressing gown before tying it off at his waist as he reached for his phone “Breaker must have gone...bet that's what popped...”

Reading the front timer on his phone he could see it was 3:30am...it had been a good four hours since he went to bed...maybe the dragon had overloaded the circuits or something? Possible...he thought, he had no idea how it would interact with the electrics of his house and he had plugged it directly into his mains from its tail.

Turning on the torch bathed the room in a glow that caused long shadows to form along his walls as he made his way slowly downstairs, his bare feet echoing soft reverberations on the carpet of the staircase as he crept downstairs holding the impromptu torch close, trying to be quiet as if not to wake his guest.

Getting to the bottom and standing at the door into the garage he steeled himself and took breath.

“Go in, turn on the breaker, check the dragon...go back to bed...sleep...yeah that's a good plan” and with that he slowly pushed the door open with a gentle creek as the torch light crept across the floor of the room and the first thing Jaredin did was look to make sure his guest was alright

And that is where he paused...the dragon...was gone?!

Sitting where the dragon had been was the quilt, thrown to the side with no evidence of his guest, only dust and empty space.

Suddenly a sinister and terrifying thought crept into his mind as he stood there frozen and felt his blood turn to ice in his veins as he had the very distinct impression that he was not alone...and he was very much being watched at that very moment, that thought in itself caused the hairs on the back of his to stand on end.

No, he was definitely being watched...hunted.

As if being stalked by a predator and afraid to know the answer he slowly, gently turned his head and phone to the side to look around the rest of the room to see if his gut was telling him right.

In the darkness at the opposite corner end where the circuit breaker was he spied a pair of piercing, glowing blue orbs looking down at him, right at him.

His eyes locked on them and for a moment for the first time in his life that he knew true fear.

His hands began to shake and his heart stopped - he couldn't move, his whole body refused to respond to his motions, frozen to the spot and incapable of reacting to either run towards or away, words choked in his throat and it felt like an eternity as the dark glow of those two orbs looked not just at him but through him.

Before his body could decide what to do the decision was made for him as with surprising agility for a creature as large and bulky as the dragon it growled ominously and charged at him swiftly making up the distance from across the opposite side and pinned him, hard, against the wall as his grip on his phone light source fell to the ground in the scuffle and a muffled yelp from Jaredin as he crashed against the cold stone back wall of the garage.

He cried out in pain as his head slammed hard and bounced off the wall to then be choked as he felt the hands of the dragon clasp around his neck and press him with crushing force against the wall. Panicking he reached his hands up to try and pry the metal arm away from him as he felt was lifted from the ground as his legs kicked out and was pinned firmly - the growling snout of the dragon moving closer to him.

The blue light illuminated the gap between them - seeing the sharp, white teeth bore at him, easily capable of tearing him apart. The claws at his throat pricked the skin ready to pierce it at any moment as the weight of the dragon pressed him harder into the wall in a way to stop him from struggling as his dragons body weight pressed into him like a truck.

“P-please...” he spluttered between gasping breaths as his legs kicked at the wall to try and find purchase as he felt his vision dim and his head spin, feeling wetness on the back of his head...no doubt injured from the strike against the wall. “...p-pleas...ack!” He tried to repeat but was cut off as the dragon squeezed his hands around his neck more firmly, cutting him off and causing the shaking human to wheeze for breath.

“Where am I? Why am I here? Answer!” The voice was deep and strong, powerful and commanding as the snout moved closer now nearly touching Jaredin’s nose. Jaredin spluttered once more, struggling to breath let alone speak! He tried once more to pry the dragon's hands away from his throat and was given at least a small amount of leverage to allow him to catch his breath and speak in hurried breaths.

“I...ack, found you out..outside...brought you in....t-tried to help” tears pricked the side of his eyes ran down his cheeks as his whole body wretched with his vision dimming to almost completely darkness only the blue eyes of the dragon still clear in front of him, his flailing growing steadily weaker as his pitiful struggles availed him naught as the arm remained unmoving.

Between sobs and tears he stared straight at the dragon and cried out meekly “w-want to help...t-thats a-all I wan-wanted to do...h-help” his tone getting weaker towards the end as his strength began to leave his body.

“H-help...” he cried out as his flailing stopped suddenly and his hands began to drop to his side.

For a moment Jaredin thought he saw his life flash before his eyes, sadness filled his heart as he felt and heard his slowing heartbeat in his head like a drum growing quieter and softer as the last of his vision left him.

He thought about himself, all he had achieved, all he had hoped to achieve...and then the dragon, the mysterious creature which appeared like thunder in his life and would now end it for reasons he would now never know.

He just wanted to help...

Help...

Help...

For a moment he thought he must have blacked out as he lost track of everything and could only feel himself falling in his own mind as his consciousness slipped away before suddenly yanking back as the pressure against his neck relented and he felt himself collapsing to the ground with a heavy and sudden thud.

Immediately Jaredin's eyes snapped open and he began to heave and cough as he spluttered back to life with a gasping breath. Taking deep and powerful breaths as his hands rubbed his throat as his head lay against the floor, saliva dripped from his mouth and pooled in front of him as he coughed and wheezed struggling to catch his breath. As he slowly began to recover his mind returned to the present as he remembered what had just happened and why he had been like that and turned his head to the side to see the legs of his assailant and slowly looked up to see the same blue eyes staring down at him through his tear filled sight.

"h-Help..."

Still struggling to catch his breath he pressed himself up against the wall as hard as he could and tightly tucking himself between wall and the shelving unit he found himself beside and tried to back away as much as possible as the fear returned for what else the dragon may have planned. His legs kicked out clumsily against the ground in a blind panic and a vain attempt to get as much of himself away from the dragon as he could. He was shaking, he was crying, he was in pain - and he was afraid.

As he gently sobbed he looked away from the dragon tucked his head down and shook it in dread "P-Please don't kill me, take what you want and leave me...I don't mean you any harm, I promise, please..." he spoke in wracked and hitched sobs as he felt his head throb powerfully. Reaching up and shakily running his hand over the back of his head he brought it forward to see it covered in blood....his blood...as his head throbbed once more which caused him to wince and yelp in pain as it burned the back of his eyes as tears fell to the cold concrete ground.

Examining his hand as his breathing became panicked he was aware enough that the air around him shifted suddenly. Turning his head and through his blurry watery

vision could see the dragon had now crouched in front of him. Panic filled him once more as he shook his head and renewed his attempts to press himself into the wall.

As he did so through the corner of his eye he spied the dragon shifting and moving as his hand began to move toward him and once more his blood turned cold as he shook his head and tried to move it away from the dragon whilst weakly protesting.

“No..please...no” Jaredin muttered and upon seeing the dragon would not relent looked away once more before feeling the hand mere inches away from his head, its heat now radiating against him letting his presence be felt.

It was then for the second time he heard the deep and powerful voice of the dragon speaking to him.

“You are injured. Hold still please - I can help but this will take a moment” the tone this time was completely different to before. The malice and barely contained rage now replaced with a soft gentleness with even a hint of concern, the voice much gentler and the deep bass replaced with a soothing resonance.

Jaredin froze, not wishing to anger the dragon further as hitched sobs continued to escape his eyes but as he sat there he felt a soft heat radiating against his head and the pain in it begin to drift away as if it was ice melting in the sun as the dizziness and vision blur began to recede as once more gained the ability to think clearly, as if the clouds lifted from his mind and his consciousness returned fully.

Once more the dragon spoke as his hand moved away.

“There we go, how does that feel?” The dragon was smiling as Jaredin turned to look at him and reached to the back of his head to feel for the injury once more only to feel...it had gone!? He stared at his hand again before rubbing the back of his head a second time to check to see if he had missed it but no, it was gone, it was...healed!? The injury which had been inflicted had vanished as if it had never existed.

His eyes now locked on the dragon and seeing how the severe and angry expression had changed completely, it was as if it was an entirely different dragon - no longer was it baring teeth at him or growling but it looked at him with what could almost be...compassion? The sharp blue eyes now felt gentler, warmer...kinder as it reached back out with his hand, palm open and welcoming.

“I am sorry for attacking you - I was confused and thought perhaps this was a prison of some kind. I can see now however that is not the case and you were only trying to help me. Thank you. If you had not charged me I may not have been able to reactivate. Please forgive me for my actions. I was not myself and I promise you are safe now, I too mean you no harm, I swear”. As he finished the dragon then indicated down to his hand “For now let's get you off that cold floor though, if I felt it then you most certainly must and I would be most unkind if I allowed you to catch a cold on my account”

For a moment Jaredin was once more paralysed as he tried to process the mix of emotions he was now feeling. Only a few moments ago he was being attacked and thought he might die...and now it was somehow healing his injuries and offering to help him up, promising him he was not going to hurt him? So many questions were going through his mind that he wanted answered but...but he was right...the floor was cold.

His chest ached as the last of his tears fell from his cheek and he shakily moved to sit up against the wall. The dragon's eyes followed him but he did not move or force himself upon him. Staring back down at the hand offered in kindness he felt the pain fresh in his neck and body and for a moment considered not accepting the invitation. However as his mind returned to him he thought back on the circumstances and wondered if he perhaps may have done the same if he was caught up in a situation like this? Would he panic and lash out?

Regardless he had nowhere to go and he would be lying if he didn't want to get to know this dragon better and maybe start things off on a better footing.

“T-thank you” Jaredin coughed out as, with a small amount of trepidation, he reached out his own hand out to the dragon before gently placing it in its.

The hand was warm and the padding soft against his skin, he could feel himself blush somewhat before being gently but swiftly hoisted upwards and within a second he was once more standing on his feet.

Though even then he felt himself stumble as his legs shook and almost gave out under him. For a moment he thought he may once more fall back to the floor but the dragon swiftly caught him and put his arm around him and helped him up as Jaredin steadied his feet on the ground with the aid of the dragon.

“Ah, careful now - I must have given you quite the fright...again I am very sorry...?” he trailed off looking down at the human being held in his arm and Jaredin realised he was asking him a question!

“Erm, oh! Jaredin...Jaredin Snow...Mr...?” he responded with a curious tone as the dragon cocked his head slightly, almost as if confused for a moment before offering his answer.

“No mister...just...Jared...also Snow, but just Jared” the dragon, Jared, trailed off slightly “Well I never expected to run into someone who has almost the exact same name as myself! Even more so a good reason for me to treat you with care rather than how I did prior! Do you have a place where we might be able to sit so we could talk perhaps? I would love to get to know you more and equally answer any questions you may have Jaredin”

“n-No...problem” Jaredin added and pressed his hand gently against the chest of the dragon as he felt his stability return. He felt warmth and a soft hum from it this time instead of cold unresponsive metal like previous...and now he could think and didn't consider himself in any danger the questions just kept...coming. “Y-yes...of course...I could, get you a drink?” He was rather awkwardly unsure if the dragon even needed food and drink but he was surprised when he was greeted with a firm nod and a short but comforting chuckle which caused him to smile in return, even if only slightly.

“That would be nice, thank you” the dragon, Jared, indicated to the door behind him “this way, right?” Jaredin responded with a slow nod before being guided forward as the dragon continued to support him, walking beside him, his arm still around his back and keeping a firm hold on him as he was guided out of the garage and out of the cold.

As they walked in his mind all Jaredin could think of was how his night had taken a turn for the unique...and thankful he was not going to be a stain on his own walls...

Bonding

Sitting in the kitchen he looked at Jared who was leaning against the kitchen units to the side having decided that the wooden chairs might not be able to successfully hold his weight and not wanting to cause any damage to the furniture.

He had now managed to calm himself and enough so to make them both a drink, tea, he certainly needed it to steady his nerves. His hands still shook slightly as he recovered from the experience. Jared, the dragon's name as he had learned, had been nothing short of distraught at the harm he had caused his host and had apologised profusely for the injuries he caused.

With the power restored now, with a little help from the dragon, he got a good look at his stature and build now. He truly was a bulky creature, the armour adding significant size but still somehow managed to retain a small degree of elegance as the almost comically small mug was held in one of his large finger claws. His blue eyes staring at him from across the room retained their warmth as Jaredin caught him up with what he knew and how he found him outside after a sudden bang and brought him in and tried to help by charging his tail - which elicited a laugh from the dragon as he was amused his tail did that - having explained it could do such things in an emergency but appreciating how humorous it must have looked.

In turn Jared explained what had happened and confirmed that Jaredin had already suspected that he was not of this world. He had been on a mission in a world distant from his own and something happened which drained him of energy. As such his systems kicked into emergency mode and teleported him to the safest place it could find...and for some reason it chose here. He explained who he was and what he was...a cybernetic lifeform who could cross dimensions and time as he hunted his prey and tried to help people along the way. That is what he had been doing before he ended up here.

He was a Guardian, a protector of sorts, which is why it pained him he had inflicted such pain, even if it was not his intent. As he called himself a "Guardian of Balance"

In turn Jaredin explained a little of the world he ended up in - it was, compared to the dragon, a backwater planet, not even space capable yet though on the cusp of inter system travel but still relatively primitive compared to the technology within him. A world which had not yet discovered any life other than itself in the wider galaxy. He then

explained who he was and the work that he did, nothing that compared to that but it allowed him to live a comfortable if not boring in comparison lifestyle.

Through it all, even the dull drum of his own life Jared listened intently and never showed any signs of boredom or lack of interest, as if just as curious about his new human friend as Jaredin was about his dragon visitor.

After a while however their discussions drifted away from the general as Jared placed his cup down and rubbed his metal chin lightly,

“I see...hmmm, but the question as to why my system thought to bring me here remains unanswered...” the dragon mused as he looked across to Jaredin “...there must be a reason, and that's not to say your otherwise excellent hospitality is not a good enough reason in itself... that and how you are taking meeting an extraterrestrial life form for the first time either, you are coping rather well I must say compared to some I have met”

“Oh, I'm not I can assure you” Jaredin chuckled nervously and waved his hands around in front of him before putting his own empty mug down “My mind is going a mile a second right now with so many questions...but right now I am just...in awe of you...I mean now you are not choking me out...you are...well, spectacular” He paused as the blush once more began to grow on his cheek as he looked downwards ever so slightly. “I hope this won't come across as...weird and creepy but...I have a fondness for machines and dragons and you being here are the embodiment of all of that! So I suppose that might be helping a bit as I am literally meeting...well a dream!” he could feel his cheeks go crimson red from that admission as he felt his feet shuffle a little nervously under the table.

He sighed and shook his head “Sorry, I shouldn't have said that”

“Oh I am not embarrassed, in fact I am flattered, All the more reason for me to make it up to you for my poor behaviour earlier - but I am glad my presence can be somewhat calming for you despite that, it makes me happier to know”

The dragon chuckled and shifted as he lurched up from his position against the side and walked over to Jaredin before kneeling down in front of him “Well the least I can give you then is as much time as you need to ask whatever questions you may have. To be honest it will be a short while before my energy levels are enough for me to open a rift home and I am in no rush...though might I ask a favour please?” he then offer his hand out once more to Jaredin “I have a theory on why I ended up here but to

confirm it could I...take a drop of your blood, more gently this time, I promise” he added the last part hastily as Jaredin twitched ever so slightly from the request,

“My blood? Why do you need my blood?” was the obvious question he followed up as he hesitated to place his hand into the dragons,

“I want to run a genetic analysis...I have a feeling, a suspicion on why I ended up here but in order to confirm I would need a drop of your blood. I promise it will be painless” he put out his open hand and nodded towards it “You can trust me, I will prove that to you I hope”,

Pausing for a moment Jaredin relented and with a great deal of trust in the dragon's intention rested his palm on the dragons once more feeling that gentle heat radiating upwards from it.

“Ok...be gentle please...” watching closely he saw Jared nod before reaching forward with his other hand and placing a claw gently against the end of Jaredins index finger. He felt a slight pressure for a moment before the claw slowly was pulled back back. At the very tip of it a small splotch of red at the end of it.

He was right though, it was painless. Jared smiled and squeezed Jaredin’s hand gently before letting it slip back,

“Thank you for trusting me” smiling the dragon paused and let his hand remain out as Jaredin left his to linger for a moment, enjoying the warmth and presence of the dragon before realising it was done and sheepishly pulled his hand away and tucking it into his lap embarrassed with his blush only growing,

“Oh! that was quick!” leaning back in the chair he rubbed his finger gently with his thumb which seemed to be totally fine, no further bleeding or injury - no doubt thanks to that advanced technology he was talking about before, perhaps similar to how he healed his head?

Looking back up to Jared he watched him tap at a control unit that looked like some form of computer interface over his right arm as holographic screens and monitors popped up showing lines of information and something Jaredin recognised as genetic code strings and letters...but the rest was far beyond his understanding.

It was clear then that the technology within Jared was lightyears ahead of anything he had ever known! The thought of how such things might work tugged at the

back of his mind but he surmised that even if he asked he may not even understand the answer!

He watched the dragon work however as he tapped away and analysed screens, his hand sweeping from side to side as displays changed to show new information as lines spread out and colours swapped out. It was like watching some form of sci-fi show in all honesty and Jaredin would be lying to say if he didn't find it somewhat mesmerising.

After a while Jared stopped and with a firm nod looked back over to Jaredin breaking him from his gawking!

"Hmmm, there we go...found it. I believe I now understand why I ended up here - and I must say I do believe it is the safest place outside of my ship I could end up being"

"Oh? How so?" confused Jaredin looked back at the dragon as he moved to stand and place his large hand on the smaller humans shoulder

"That is because we are the same...well, dimensionally speaking...and somewhat genetically too - see" once more the holographic screens popped up this time in front of Jaredin and it was showing information similar to before, two sets of DNA overlapping one another with green parts lighting up over most of it with the exception of a couple of parts in a dark red.

He stared at it for a few moment before shaking his head and looking up to the dragon's face,

"I...I don't get it, I'm sorry...is the green DNA we share or...?" he was rewarded as Jared squeezed his shoulder gently,

"Exactly!" the dragon respond with a hint of excitement "It's our genes, mine on the right and yours on the left - it seems we share a significant amount of the same genetic chemistry...now there are some obvious questions, like why am I a dragon and the such, well we genetically match in so far as the common genes between us can - those that make us unique not so much, but where it matters we are a 99.99% match to one another, as close as you can be essentially without being a direct close. This is why my systems identified this location as safe as, in its moment of haste, it confused you...for me and well...you know the rest"

Hearing those words caused Jaredin to become stunned, it felt like it was something of a trend for the evening and this one was a doozy. For all intensive purposes he was being told that this dragon was his twin!? He shook his hands of him,

“Wait...wait wait - you mean to tell me that we are related, after a fashion? Like family?” in response the dragon nodded back to him emphatically,

“Correct, for all intensive purposes - we are family, like a dimensional brother...well now I feel ever worse for how I treated you earlier now!” as he heard Jared speak his shoulder once more felt the squeeze of the dragons...now his dragon brother's hand, comforting him. Tears pricked the edges of his eyes for second time that evening but not in fear this time and he could not explain why as his breath hitched,

“Family...” he repeated softly, he was related to a cybernetic dragon, if there were any more perfect way for a dream to come true then he did not know it. But still he struggled to believe it! Good things like this didn't happen to him, ever in fact, he was broadly speaking dull and boring! But now he is being told the mechanical titan of a dragon who appeared on his doorstep was not just a random act of chance but a cosmic meeting of the closest thing to a family that he might have ever hoped to have?

His own family had long since passed away due to age and illness, he was the only one left in his family, no siblings and no parents anymore...just him to fend for himself in the world. And now a dream becomes reality and he is left unable to just...accept it. He turned his head back up to Jared, the tears easily visible in his eyes,

“But we are totally different, right? I mean I am just a human in a...well mostly unexciting job and you...well, you are just...amazing, awesome...just...I...it must be a mistake right? Perhaps your scanner is wrong?”

That had to be it right? A mistake? An error perhaps?

In response Jared began Kneeling once more and shook his head whilst his eyes never broke line with Jaredin “I am certain, I have only ever heard of the theory of dimensional twins, that for each individual that exists in a dimension there is a twin of them in some form at some point in another, or several. It's such a rare phenomenon that I only know of two other documented cases in my peoples entire history, well three now I suppose. But, this is real I promise you! It means you just got a new friend for life! And since you are already such a great fan of mechanical dragons I can only hope I continue to impress you and make you feel happy!” the dragon beamed excitement and genuine happiness, so much so his tail was wagging behind him ever so gently but

enough that it was banging against the legs of the table behind him as it slapped against the wood.

Jaredin had to choke back tears and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand as he tried to hold back the sheer joy, scared it would be snatched away any moment or he might wake up from whatever dream he had found himself in.

It was so much to take in that honestly to say he was overwhelmed at this stage would be the understatement of the century. The night had been the strangest and most surreal experience he had ever had with emotions across the entire spectrum. Now to be told though that he had an interdimensional brother and he was a massive cybernetic dragon who looked like he could snap him, or anyone he knew, in half...well, that was something.

“Jared...” his voice shook with emotion as his eyes averted down as to not embarrass himself even further he felt the tears roll down his cheek as he felt the dragon place his hands over his and giving them a firm squeeze before leaning in closer, his snout only inches away from his cheek as his warm breath washed over him comfortingly as he spoke softly,

“It's ok, I'm here - take your time” he responded so genuinely, his tone strong and gentle all at once. Invoking the idea of his being a protector, shielding Jared and being there for him, his presence once a terrifying visage now comforting and warm making him wonder how he could have ever feared such a gentle titan. Despite his strength, his power and his sheer enormity he was showing such tenderness and gentleness.

His emotions risked boiling over and without thinking about it Jaredin pushed himself forward and threw his arms suddenly over the shoulder of the mechanical titan and hugged him as best one could a creature as massive as he. His head resting on the warm metal of his shoulder and burying his head into his neck as the tears continued to run down his cheek as he sobbed uncontrollably.

In return the dragon smiled and put his arms around his smaller human ‘brother’ and pulled him close into a caring embrace, wrapping him up in warmth and security one hand running down his back and another cradling the back of his head as he gently rubbed and nuzzled his cheek

“I've got you, don't worry. I'm real and I promise to protect you, always” his arms wrapped as tightly as he safely could and rubbing his large hands down his back as his wings folded in to cocoon him in warmth.

As Jaredin sat there sobbing into the dragon all other thoughts left his mind, all other emotions vanished and here in this moment for the first time in a very long time...Jaredin felt peace not just in his heart but in his mind.

He was complete right where he was in the arms of a dream.

Journey

“Come with you!?” Jaredin asked, shocked as he stood in the living room, his dragon ‘brother’ chuckling to himself as he stood looking out the window at the street as a car passed on by.

It had been a couple of days since the shock arrival of his new friend and they had since scantily spent any time apart as they endlessly shared stories of each other's lives. Jaredin had learned so much of his new ‘brother’ and the adventures he had been on and the life he had led, including what caused him to be currently what he was.

Even at night despite his protests and willingness to sleep on the sofa and let Jared have the bed for himself he refused and stated he still had to make up for his poor first impression and insisted that he sleep with him in the same bed! He would have been lying if he said he didn't feel it was a little embarrassing at first but in the end he could not say no, in Jared's own words, why fight what you want when it would only harm you. So the past nights have been some of the most...restful he could remember as he had slept against the titan of a dragon who had proven to be alot more comfortable than he had first thought being all metal.

There was also the other piece of information he shared in that he was also a size shifter...which he demonstrated by having grown to nearly twice his height yesterday and nearly crashing through his ceiling before relenting on his request of not wanting to fix a hole in his roof! He had chosen to remain his 8ft self for now as he stated it made it easier to interact with one another.

Though Jaredin would admit that seeing him that large was somewhat...exciting.

All in all...if dreams could be perfect then this would be it!

But the weekend had come to an end and now the work morning lingered Jaredin stood in a mild predicament. He had to go to work and Jared had informed him the night before his reactor was now fully recharged so he was capable of making the jump back to his ship any time - he was ready to leave.

Though he had stated he had no massive need to rush off he did make it clear that he could not hang around forever - which Jaredin appreciated, afterall asking someone to stay when they had their own life was never going to be feasible and

though he would miss him terribly as he had grown rather attached over the last few days, they both had lives they needed to live...

But this, this came out of nowhere! The expected melancholy of the morning now turned more to confusion.

“Is that...even possible? I mean it must be if you are asking but...is that, ok?” a million what if scenarios ran through his head simultaneously such as what would he do about his home? His job? His friends!? It was one thing to ask Jared to stay in a world that may not be kind to him, it was another to ask him to cross dimensional barriers!

Jared seemed to pick up on this and let out a soft laugh in response “You really do overthink things, but that's part of your charm. Well the short answer to all that is - Yes. The longer answer is I can bring you with me, my rifts are like tears in the fabric of reality so you could walk through it as easily as I do, and as for if it's ok part well...it's my ship so I also say you are more than welcome aboard - your my brother so of course you are more than welcome!” he paused and walked the small distance over to Jaredin and placed a hand on his shoulder “Your life here isn't going to change, you remember I am not just a interdimensional traveler but a time traveler too, right? If you ever wanted to come back here you could arrive at the very same moment you left as if no time had passed at all. So you could stay with me your whole life if you like or return back here at any time if you wanted to deal with affairs or meet with friends and family. You won't miss out on anything you don't want to” his hand slipped away and he playfully ruffled the smaller humans hair “As I have said to you several times this weekend I will do whatever makes you happy - you are the closest thing to family I have now so whatever you says goes”

“Yeah, I remember it's just...a sudden proposition and well...” Jaredin then turned to look up at the dragon and rubbed his arms whilst letting out a sigh with a smile “...I am overthinking things again, you are right”

Jared chuckled and turned his head to look outside once more “Plus there is so much I could show you, worlds you couldn't imagine, worlds that would leave you even more speechless than you are right now” winking back to him as his own unique way as his eye dimmed and lit back up for a second he tapped at his wrist computer as it chirped to life.

There was a pause as Jared tapped away before looking back up to the dragon,

“Is it painful? I mean the rift?” Jaredin asked stepping closer and looking up at the console as Jared tapped away at it and looked down to him,

“Oh not at all, it's rather mundane if I am honest. You walk through it and then appear somewhere else like walking through a doorway” looking back at his console he pointed to the open space in the middle of the room “I would make it appear there and it's as easy as that - next thing you know you would be on my ship, the Tempus Finis”

Jared had told him much about his ship, the Tempus Finis, Times End in Latin which amused Jaredin that the ship was named in a language he was familiar with, however he was assured that was merely how it was translated through his translator and it had somehow chosen Latin as the language of choice. Regardless, the ship sounded like something straight out of Sci-fi. Not just a spaceship but a timeship able to navigate the currents of the timeline and emerge anywhere and anytime.

He had admitted he had ‘stolen’ it when he was left his own home dimension, along with its engineer who came willingly but it was the pinnacle of his people's technology and allowed him to travel like he would himself in comfort with a base of operations he could store materials and the like on in case of need - better than a static building on some far flung world, in his own words.

He was right too in that the adventures he would have there would be endlessly more than his life here - he could be the first human to see things others could never dream of, to experience things and sights and smells...it was appealing, and he did not want to leave Jared's side either, if there was something he wanted more in life it was to be able to spend his life with the dragon who became his guardian, a chance meeting which had turned his life on its head.

He sighed and rubbed the back of his neck,

“I am looking forward to having wonderful neck cramps - I am still not used to this whole looking up nonsense” He playfully elbowed Jared before giving a firm “Alright - alright I am in if nothing else just to see how and where you live and to also be the first human, that I am aware of...that has travelled to another dimension! And if I find myself...homesick...?”

“Then I could drop you right back here like nothing happened, and if you did that I would think no less of you and would promise to visit regularly, so even if we were separated I would never let it be for long, I promise”

Jared smiled and finished tapping at his console and pointed it towards the centre of the room in which the rift appeared and hummed pleasantly before stepping back slightly

“Alright then...after you”

It shimmered in the morning light in the middle of the room - it looked like a pane of frosted glass with something on the other side looking bright however it wasn't very clear, as if it was blurred, shimmering away. The perceived borders of the rift were hard to discern, he could tell it was there and he could tell it existed however he could not for certain tell where the borders started or ended.

But he stepped forward and stood where he felt the air grow colder and took a deep breath reaching his right hand ahead of him. He felt it skim across the rift, it offered paper thin resistance to his touch as he pushed through it like one might through a puddle of water. His hand blurred but was visible on the other side as a cold edge around his wrist caused the hairs on his arm to stand on goosebumps.

On the other side there were all kinds of discoveries to be had and adventures to be shared with Jared. And to be fair that was what he wanted - in his heart of hearts, he wanted to spend more time with Jared and learn more about him and to hug him and be held by him. He knew it was selfishing to an extent but he had let so many opportunities pass him by in life and if this was the only chance he was going to get to be this happy he was going to take it and chance the risk and stop playing life safe.

With a sharp intake he stepped forward with a confident stride to his new life with his new family.

Jared stepped in behind him as the portal slowly closed leaving behind an empty house filled with empty dreams - as Jaredin embarked on the greatest adventure he could ever have and at his side the best friend he could ever ask for.

Things would never be the same, and for now he knew true happiness.