

I stayed a good distance away, giving Anthony the space he requested. After a few moments I could hear the sound of him trying to force himself to vomit, which only lasted a couple minutes. I tried not to eavesdrop too hard, but there was little else to focus on. I could hear the large fluffy dragon begin to cry, I felt a pit open up in my own stomach, the human clearly meant so much to him. I wanted to do something to help, but it wasn't my place, so I stayed silent and began watching the clouds as they moved across the sky, contemplating the ones I'd cared for just as much, if not even more..

It was refreshing to see even new seekers followed a similar path when left to their own devices. The dragon, while large and overwhelming to all that existed on this planet, elected to stay hidden, keep to himself and care for his human. This is how I wished it'd always been, how all seekers acted. Thoughts started flooding my mind of the darkness we're capable of, our willingness to serve and dominate, two things that should counter one another. I thought of the seekers I'd killed, the seekers that tried to kill me, and all because of the greed that worked its way into areas of the race.

Soon enough the duo seemed to be okay, Anthony's crying died down and there was a calm in the air. The real question now was what's next? Would I be stuck in these woods, determined to keep the human safe and teach Anthony everything he needed to know, or would I be taking them both home.. Truth be told I was unsure about both paths. To be on earth again, the place of all my heartache, yet tucked away from human kind, or to be on the world I used to call home, with the company of other seekers and friends alike.. before this little outing I'd thought I'd spend the majority of my time alone, pondering the work behind and ahead of me. Admittedly I had been enjoying my time alone, away from others, away from the pain I felt with my duties. The less people I know the better, reducing my relationship with sorrow. I'm still connected to the souls I move from this plane to the next, but as harsh as it is to say, I won't miss them the way I miss..

"Kender, you can come over"

Anthony called for me and I stepped out of the treeline. As I eased my way towards the duo I tried my best to look less imposing for Alex's sake. My eyes scanned over the human, held in Anthony's paws. He looked at me in bewilderment, it seemed he wasn't as scared as I thought he'd be, though he did look somewhat concerned.

"Hello, Alex."

I say simply, laying down on my stomach and chest, making myself seem even less intimidating. The human nodded to me, then quickly turned to Anthony's head.

"Is.. is she who was pursuing us?"

"She's the main one, yes, I think I caught a whiff of another, at least one more, but she's been the one I was afraid of."

I chuckled lightly, giving them both a warm smile. Alex looked kinda rough, in tattered clothes, a bit scrawny, long curly brown hair that reached his shoulders, still a bit matted from dragon saliva. He looked young, his face had no scarring, and with brown eyes that darted between me and his most trusted friend.

“There's nothing to be afraid of, I'm here to help, to be of service to Anthony and yourself, you see Anthony is a very special creature who has a lot of potential to help lots of people”

The duo stared at me, confused. I hadn't told Anthony everything, I had saved a few of my goals and information for this moment.

“I'm sure you're still a little traumatized from the last little while Alex, I would urge you to go lightly on your large friend. He's a part of a race, my race, that have innate abilities of healing and keeping smaller creatures safe, he just didn't know about it until about an hour ago.”

The human seemed a bit overwhelmed, perhaps I was going too fast, but now wasn't the time to stop.

“his.. predatory habits are mostly out of his control, his instincts are quite hard to ignore, but his instincts were to keep you safe, of that I can assure you. I know it sounds crazy, but take a look at yourself, it's been hours and you're completely unscathed.”

Alex went silent and looked down, clearly deep in thought, he certainly seemed a little overwhelmed. Anthony on the other hand was looking at me, with a look of subtle fear.

“I want to take you and Anthony, somewhere I can teach Anthony about himself, and where you can live comfortably. You both, must be tired and cold-”

“Where would you take us?”

Alex spoke up, his voice was a tad shaken, he did seem at least a little bit afraid of me, or perhaps the situation, not making eye contact, keeping his voice and head low. Anthony rubbed his curly hair with a claw, the affection seemed to be well received.

“My home planet-”

“Wait.. you're an alien?”

“Oh so you know what aliens are? Well I guess yes, you'd call me an alien, though I've spent a good deal of my life here on earth”

The two friends seemed so confused, everything I was telling them, they seemed to understand, yet it was like a shock to them. Clearly they only had each other to trust for a long time, and it was important I broke that streak, giving them another person if not many more to trust.

“I am curious about you two though, I wonder how long you've both known one another?”

Anthony and Alex looked at each other, as if trying to recall or silently asking the other if it was okay to answer such a question.

“Well.. Alex ran away from home when he was barely a teenager. That same day he found me, that was around 7 years ago give or take, we haven't been keeping count of the days, just the seasons. It's been around 7 winters.”

“And you don't remember how you got here, right Anthony?”

“I don't, I can remember the emotions I felt before winding up alone in the woods. I felt joy, safety, happiness.. and then.. sorrow. Followed by a fear I've only felt again most recently-”

The dragon blinked his eyes, seemingly clutching his human a bit more snug, I knew what he was referring to in terms of recently, it must've been a wild thing to feel, thinking you're in the process of killing the person closest to you, without any control over the situation. But knowing he was afraid before he found himself alone only gave me more questions. I seriously doubt he was dumped here by his parents, seekers are far too attached to their young. Which brings up that sorrow he felt too, a picture was starting to paint itself in my head, a not so pleasant one.

“I see, well perhaps I'll be able to help you remember your past, if it's something you'd like to remember.”

“I don't mind either way, I started a new life here with Alex, and I was very young at the time. I wasn't even fully grown”

“When I found Anthony he was barely as large as a bear, in fact that's what I thought he was... though he was crying and.. well.. I'll never forget what he said to me..”

Anthony raised an eye ridge, this seemed to be a topic neither had delved into in a long time, perhaps since it happened. Alex's voice was low, his nervousness more than apparent. I further lowered myself to the ground, laying flat to make myself seem even less of a threat.

“What did he say?”

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The boy moved through the woods, towards the sound of cries for help. Though he himself wasn't in the best situation, the kindness in his heart wouldn't let him walk in any direction but towards the sorrowful voice.

"Please help me..."

Alex could tell the voice came from someone relative to his own age, likely that of a male. He stepped over roots and stumps, pushing branches and bushes out of his way to trek further. The rain pattered down onto and around him, beginning to pick up a bit. Alex's heart raced, he had no idea what he was doing, being out in those woods were far harsher than the television shows could ever make it seem. Fear for his own safety, the well-being of whoever was calling out, and the longevity of his survival abilities.

The voice got closer and closer, Alex could hear the sound of whimpering, the rain continued to pick up, turning to a pour. He began moving with more vigor, afraid he'd lose the voice to all the pattering of water rushing down over the trees and foliage.

"Hello!? I'm trying to find you!"

"Hello!? I'm.. I'm over here!"

The voice was so near now, the worry of losing it started fading away, and with just a few more yards of tearing through branches and vines, Alex came to a small clearing where he'd come face to face with.. what looked like a large furred creature.

Alex stopped dead in his tracks, his hair standing on end, his hair standing on the back of his neck. He was frozen, looking at the bear sized beast, his breath caught in his throat.

Anthony was sitting on his haunches, his muzzle in his hands. He looked up upon hearing the boy coming out of the thick brush. The dragon noticed that look of fear on his face, quickly swallowing another sob.

"Don't be afraid... I won't hurt you.. I'm scared too"

Alex's heart rate steadied, he gave a curious look up to Anthony before bravely moving towards the beast, stepping through mud and grass. It took a lot of courage, but at the same time the young human had little to lose at this point.

"W-What's wrong?.. why are *you* scared?"

Alex was unsure of how a big creature could be afraid. As he got closer, Alex started to recognize that Anthony was a creature he'd only seen in fantasy media, a dragon. Anthony looked at Alex with a bit of confusion, he hadn't ever met someone smaller than him that was able to speak.

“I don't know where I am.. they.. he.. killed.. My father is.. I'm alone.. I don't know how I got here.....”

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Alex looked from me to Anthony again, as if making sure he wasn't doing any wrong on Anthony by continuing. Anthony just blinked, a bit bewildered and curious, I could tell he wanted to hear what Alex had to say.

“He said.. he didn't know where he was, and.. he mentioned.. I think.. that someone killed his dad”

There was a sudden burning at the back of my mind, a realization hit me with the weight of a thousand bricks. A suspicion growing like an infestation. My heart started pounding a bit quicker in my chest.. he can't be, it's not possible..

Anthony looked a bit confused, looking down at Alex and rubbing the top of his head. Anthony didn't look shocked or hurt, just taken a little by surprise.

“My dad? I said that? Strange.. I don't remember having parents at all..”

Not a single memory of his lineage? This wasn't normal, not even close. Someone definitely tampered with Anthony's memories.. there was a silence clinging to the air, the duo looked to me as I stared back in silence. I looked over Anthony's body for a second from my spot a few yards away. Was there any reason to bring up my suspicion? No. He didn't need to know, regardless of if it's true or not. If his parents are who I think they are.. they're both long gone...

“What's wrong Kender? You look like you know something..”

Anthony was perceptive, I cracked a smile, waving a handpaw to dismiss his inquiry. It's best to keep it all to myself and talk with Gold about this before anything else. After all Gold was quite close with Alice, he'd wanna know or find out if the seeker he found was her son, supposedly dead. The timelines don't match up, but the one who killed Darin had the ability to send things forward in time, and mess with one's memories. It's not that far-fetched, considering seekers can't and haven't been able to reproduce in years and years, much longer than the fluffy lad has been alive. The only other fluffy dragon I ever knew was Darin.. it just makes too much sense..

“Nothing nothing, I'm just trying to figure out what might have happened to you, but I haven't much of an idea yet-”

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Gold sat peacefully in the meadow, his mind quite a good deal untethered from the moment. His focus was on energy, the energy of his friend, colleague even, Kender. He focused on her emotions, finding that there was a sense of hope, a sense of fear, among many other senses and feelings. She was a dynamic being, her emotions were strong and easily recognized by Gold, her age and experience made her energy stand out like a sore thumb.

“At least it's not going badly”

He said to himself out loud, a smile still stretched across his face as he honed in, trying to get a feeling for the young seeker and the human, both of which were very chaotic energies. Neither had found themselves yet, they were both subconsciously afraid and confused. Their lives up to this point were difficult, yet pretty straightforward. They had found comfort in their situation, mostly in that they were able to keep going together.

“Life must live, after all”

Gold said, again aloud to himself. His ponderings kept him fully sated in the moment. He knew that Anthony's energy was ready to expand, ready to be more than a dragon in the woods of earth. He was capable of so much more, so much good. His energy was nearly innocent, not a single malicious thought or feeling, sure there was a healthy helping of selfishness deep within his character, but it's to be expected given the situation and quite frankly would appear to be a baseline characteristic of any being trying to survive despite the odds.

Truth be told, Anthony wouldn't take much effort to convince to leave.. Alex however-

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My head was racing with thoughts. The last 16 hours or so had been as intense as I've ever experienced. My best friend ate me, spit me out half a day later, and now we're both locked in conversation with another dragon, one that seems to know quite a lot about Anthony and his.. complications.

I thought Anthony was the only dragon I'd ever see, and thought he was so good he'd easily fend off his urges.. yet I found myself in his belly, a place I only ever visited before in my nightmares. Perhaps his self control wasn't as strong as I thought.

I wanted everything to be okay between us, I didn't want to see him cry, I wished things could be what they were yesterday. But I can't change the fact I was.. defiled. Regardless, an accident, a regret, it still happened. When I was inside my friend's stomach I thought my heart was going to

explode. The fear and anxiety I felt was beyond what I thought a person could take. I thought I was dead, to my best friend.

There was a sickness in my stomach, being held in his arms now, over his belly, socializing with a stranger. I hadn't even gotten a chance to come to terms, to piece together every emotion that's flaring up in me. I'm not angry.. but I do feel a certain disgust towards my dragon. I can't picture in my head a world where I decided to leave him, much less end his life-.. sure, he's got his instincts, and maybe at the end of the day I was safe, but neither of us knew that.

I told Anthony I forgave him, and in my heart I wanted to, I felt a pain deep inside my soul. I could forgive him, but I could never forget what it was like to have no control, to have all my being, all my life, all my future.. slide down the neck of a person I loved most.. who enjoyed every second of it..