

Kindred Spirits

Chapter 1: A Cold Reception

“Alright, nap time’s over freak!”

The dragon cracked open an eye and was immediately blinded by the setting sun bursting through the opening of his cave.

‘Ugh... how stupid am I to pick a cave that faces toward the sunset? Not to mention incredibly obvious to any would-be intruders like-’

Wait. Intruders. Someone was in the cave with him. With a snarl he shot up and blinked away any remaining drowsiness.

“There we go.” The intruder said mockingly. “Thought I was gonna have to wake you up myself. That would’ve been fun.”

Finally his sight returned and he steeled his eyes against the illumination to catch a glimpse of his enemy. However, his opponent was just a black silhouette against the remaining fading light.

“Who are you? What do you want?” He tried his best to sound menacing.

“Wow that was pathetic. Anyways, I’ll keep this short: Your cave is on Griffin Empire territory. No dragons allowed, get lost.”

“What!?” The dragon roared. “Twilight and I made especially sure this cave was a part of the Central Wilds! Sure it’s close to the Griffin Empire, but not *in* it!”

“Maybe ‘Twilight’ was right a month ago, but the Empire claimed this land a few weeks back. They sent me to kick your scaly hide out.”

He opened his mouth to argue, then quickly fell silent.

‘Why should I care about this cave anyways? No use fighting some griffins over something I don’t even like. Besides, I don’t even have that much of a hoard yet. Just a few coins, a few gems and of course...’

“Yeah sure. Whatever. I’ll leave. Just let me gather up all of my things and I’ll-”

“Leave the hoard.”

“Huh?”

“Did I stutter? I said *leave the hoard*. It’s the Empire’s now.” The intruder gave a wicked laugh. “And maybe a bit of mine as well.”

The dragon sighed, more annoyed than shocked by now. “Jeeze fine! Just a bunch of coins anyway!”

“Stop!” the silhouetted griffin commanded as the dragon fastened one of his treasures around his neck. “That stays too.”

“This is coming with me no matter what you or your ‘Empire’ says.” He growled in response, placing a claw across the brooch.

“And *you’re* going to keep it from me?”

“Do you have a death wish?! I’m a dragon for Celestia’s sake! I’d rip you apart!”

He had hoped to scare off the intruder with the threat, but they only flared out their wings and gave the same malefic laugh as before.

“You’ll find me *FULL OF SURPRISES!*”

The dragon only had time to bring up his arms in self-defense as the griffin lunged at him claws-first. While his scales protected him from the razor sharp talons, the impact sent them both flying deeper into the cave.

As soon as they hit the ground they broke their struggle and recovered. A brief moment of rest lingered before the griffin once again shot towards him. Anticipating another charge, he slashed in an arc in front of him. The griffin had instead maneuvered to his side, completely dodging the blow and exposing the dragon’s right flank.

An explosion of pain erupted from his side as both talon and beak ripped through scale and flesh. He quickly turned his head towards his side and let loose a burst of flame only for the griffin to release and dive behind him.

'He's... too fast... and its obvious he's been trained in combat...'

The dragon readied himself for another attack, but his opponent was already sitting back on his haunches, clucking his tongue against the rims of his beak.

'No wonder. He's armored as well' He thought, noting the blood red helmet and chest piece, the color of the Griffin Empire.

“Dragon’s blood.” The griffin sneered with disgust. “Not as tasty as I thought it would be. Terrible actually.”

Blood? He looked down at his side to see deep gash with dark red liquid seeping out.

“You’re injured now. You can’t run, even if you could fly faster than me. Give me that necklace-thing and scram, or die fighting over some stupid treasure!”

“How about... neither!” He roared as he dived after the griffin. The walls of the cave rumbled as he flew past the dodging griffin and slammed into the dull rocks. Instead of falling unconscious from such an extreme impact, the dragon rose again and turned back to his opponent, primal fury evident in his eyes.

“ARE YOU INSANE?!”

He ignored him and charged again. Dodge. Slam.

“This cave isn’t stable!! If you keep-”

Charge. Dodge. Slam.

This time the cave roared in response as rocks began to trickle down from the ceiling.

“Shoot... SEE YA!” The griffin jeered as he shot for the exit, only to be blocked by a sea of rocks falling right in front of him. The dragon watched in horror as the boulders showed no sign of stopping, rolling towards him like a tidal wave.

“We’re going to be crushed!!!” His would-be opponent screeched as he raced back towards him.

Without any other option, the two victims covered their heads and braced themselves as

the wall of rocks advanced to the back of the cave.

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“Am... I dead?”

“No you moron! You’ve trapped us inside this stupid cave!” A shrill voice responded.

The dragon groaned, flashes of pain wracking his head and side as he tried to rise to his feet. In the distance, a small frantic scraping along with a trickling of rock could be heard.

A small burst of green flame leapt from the dragon’s mouth and into his claw, illuminating the walls with an emerald glow. As his eyes adjusted to the sudden change of light, the dire situation they were in became evident.

In front of him, a wall of rocks both small and large stood where the entrance of the cave used to be. While most of the rocks looked movable by claw, the dragon knew the cave extended quite a ways, and the back of the cave was not a few paces behind him. The griffin from earlier was at the top of the wall of rocks, frantically trying to claw their way through to the outside.

“Wait... *I* got us trapped?!” He questioned. “*You* were the one who attacked *me!*”

“Look, it doesn’t matter anymore if we BOTH die! Now get up here and help me clear these rocks!”

The dragon grumbled, realizing his former enemy was right.

“Here’s a bit of light.” He said as he shifted the green flame to his left claw and began digging with his right. The green glow allowed him to see that the griffin had discarded his helmet and chest piece, revealing his unique features.

‘Do all griffins have these kind of curves? And what’s with those markings around his eyes? Are they natural or some tribal decoration? Wait... I’ve seen this griffin before...’

“What’s your name?”

“What the heck does it matter to you?” The griffin said as *...she?* continued to shovel

away at the rocks. “Just keep digging!”

“I said... *what is your name!?*”

“Gilda!” *She* shouted. “Just Gilda! No last name, nothing fancy, just Gilda!”

“I thought you were a male for a bit there...”

“What!?!”

“My name is Spike.”

“Wonderful! Now get digging and we can...” Gilda’s head slowly turned toward Spike, hazel eyes suddenly analyzing his purple and green scales and spines.

“Remember now?”

“You... you were the baby dragon with Rainbow Dash and her stupid friends!” Gilda growled.

“And you were that jerk griffin who blew up on everyone at the party!”

The griffin scoffed. “Whatever. Bunch of losers deserved it. Speaking of losers, why aren’t you hanging out with them back in Ponyville anyways? Finally wisen up and realize what a dumpster that village is?”

“It’s... a rather long and personal story.” Spike said lowering his head.

“Then don’t tell me, shut up and dig! If you hadn’t noticed, we’re kind of on a timer! Caves have limited amounts of air in them. We run out of air, we die.”

Spike remained quiet as they both began raking clawfuls of smaller rocks out of the way. Occasionally, he would have to strain himself to move a large boulder that blocked their path. After a few hours of digging, fatigue started to set in.

“I’d grown pretty big.” Spike began, still digging.

“Yeah I can... I can tell.” Gilda grunted.

“Couldn’t even fit in the library anymore.”

“What a shame.”

“Twilight started coming up with plans... like building me a house or... getting me a nearby cave... but Celestia made it clear: I had to leave Ponyville... and she meant *leave*... no nearby caves, just... gone.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know for sure.” Spike paused as he lifted another large rock and dropped it behind them. “I think it’s just the fact... the fact that I was the first dragon she ever truly raised with ponies. Probably thought I would give in to instinct and... well... have myself a snack. So... no chances and all that.”

Gilda chuckled in disbelief. “That’s the dumbest thing... I’ve ever heard! Are you lying??”

“Nope. So... how about you?”

“Me? Well... after that fallout with Rainbow Dash I just went back home...”

“To your parents?”

“Heck no. I was hatched the middle child. Older brother, younger sister. I was like... like a ghost to them. They ignored me, so I ignored them.”

“Wow that sucks.” Spike panted. “I guess I was always a single... a single child, with all the attention from Twilight.”

“Bah it’s nothing. Obviously I turned out fine.”

Spike managed a weak laugh.

“Something funny?” Gilda growled.

“No.”

“Good. Anyways, I went back home, and there was nothing for me to do. Got bored real

fast.”

“Nothing? No hanging out with friends or-”

“No friends.”

“Oh.”

“So in order to keep myself oc... occ... occupied.” Gilda struggled to lift a boulder that had surfaced to block their path. Spike joined in with her, surprising the griffin.

“Ready? One... Two... Three...!”

The large rock slowly eased out of its resting place, tumbling down into the stack that had piled up behind them.

“T-thanks.” Gilda gasped.

“Don’t... don’t mention it.” Spike’s breath had turned ragged and he struggled to stand.

“Already tired?”

“Well... usually I’d last a bit longer... but this gash in my side is sapping my strength...”

“Sorry...”

“It’s fine. Just... just keep talking.”

“So in order to keep myself occupied I decided I’d join the Force.”

“The army?”

“No. The Force of Andune. Military force under direct control of... the emperor.”

“Did you... have to try out or something?”

Gilda shook her head. “Sounds important... but it’s just a bunch of specially trained soldiers sent out to do stupid stuff like... steal young dragon’s hoards... collect debt from poor townspeople... stupid stuff. And now I’m here.”

Spike didn't respond, clutching his side while every breath came with high-pitched wheezing. While it might have been the green flame playing tricks on his eyes, he could have *sworn* he saw a look of concern from the griffin.

"You don't have to respond if you... if you don't want to. But I was curious... about why you were willing to fight so hard over that necklace."

"...Leaving present from... my friends... Don't want to... lose.."

Gilda nodded, not wanting to make Spike talk any more than he needed to.

Another half hour passed by, and the air began to thin out while each breath was heavy and laborious.

"Spike... I... I gotta say the truth... it's hard to breathe... I'm kinda... kinda scared..."

"Truth or dare."

"Wha-...?"

"Truth or dare?"

For the first time in what seemed forever for her, Gilda laughed. Not out of spite or mean spirit, but simple humor.

Spike laughed weakly beside her. his digging came in random bursts, only a few small rocks actually being moved away with each sweep.

"Well... obviously we... we can't... we can't do dares... so let's do truths... you first..."

"Do you..... do you ever feel... lonely?"

Gilda hesitated, not expecting such a deep question. She thought he was just rambling. Still, she had little left to lose.

"Yeah. To say the truth... as funny as this sounds... you're the first pony... griffin... dragon... I've actually talked to... since Rainbow Dash..."

Gilda's progress through the rocks had decreased dramatically as well. Only one or two rocks were swept aside with each rake of her claws. Breathing was unlike anything she had ever experienced before, as if trying to breath through a small straw combined with hours of hard labor.

"You?"

"Ever... since I left... Ponyville... You... ever been in love?"

"No... well... Rainbow Dash... had me... had me questioning... my sexuality." Gilda chuckled.

"You and... every other mare in... Ponyville."

If not for the lack of air, the dragon and griffin's laugh would have been heard across both the Griffin Empire and the Central Wilds.

"Alright... last one..." Said Gilda.

"Shoot."

"Virgin?"

Spike had gone from raking a few rocks out at a time to simply picking up the miniature boulders one by one. At Gilda's question, he gave a sad smile and fell forward in defeat.

"Yeah."

"Heh... right there beside ya pal... I..." The boulder in front of Gilda fell backwards, a pale beam of moonlight shooting through the small opening that had been created. The fresh night air's scent filled Gilda, giving her a natural high.

"Spike?"

"...mm..."

"Get over here dude. This is the best drug you can ever have."

A second wind gripped Gilda as she stood and wrapped her claws gently around Spike.

With a few seconds of strained pulling, she had positioned the dragon to be right in front of the small opening to the outside world.

“Is that... pancakes?” Spike asked softly as the same night air filled his lungs.

“No Spike.” Gilda responded with a small laugh. “That’s life.”

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Spike awoke to piercing rays of sunshine once again. With a small groan he tried to stand up only to be quickly restrained.

“Whoa there buddy. I’m no doctor, but I think it’s best if you stay down.”

“Gilda...?”

“Yeah, I dragged us to the outside edge of the cave and fell asleep with you. Wasn’t sure if you’d make it through the night. I’ve been watching you for nearly the whole day now, and this wound just... isn’t closing up all the way. I guess all that hard work you did only made it worse.”

Spike looked over towards the griffin who had moved out of the sunlight for him to see her. Gilda’s once stout feathers and fur now were ragged and tangled. What piqued Spike’s interest was a large red blotch on her side.

‘Had she been injured? or...’

“Did you... try to cover up my wound with your own body?” He asked in near amazement.

“Well yeah.” Gilda said, turning her head away. “I couldn’t let you just bleed out like that and I thought the wound would close up. It’s... it’s my fault anyways.”

“You were trying to kill me not too long ago.”

“Things change. Deal with it. Now, I suppose I could fly to Lionsberg, pick up some medical supplies and then fly back. Still... I’m a fast flier but it would take a couple of hours.”

Spike shook his head. “No need.”

“That wound isn’t closing up by itself anytime soon.”

“There’s a plant right below this cave with long, string-like leaves. Bring one of them to me.”

Gilda shrugged and took off from the cave. With a quick tuck of her wings she plummeted towards the forest floor and landed with a loud thud.

While the amount of flora was nearly limitless, only one plant nestled between grass and rock carried a leaf that reminded her of a long strip of gauze.

“Alright I got it.” Gilda shouted as she flew back up into the cave.

“Good, give it here.”

Spike took the leaf gratefully, holding it up to his snout.

“So what do you do? Eat it and it helps clotting? Breathe fire on it and it-”

The dragon’s long wet tongue shot out and wrapped around the leaf, slowly working its way across the entire strip.

“Oh.” Gilda said in surprise.

“This.” Spike said, withdrawing his tongue. “Is the Vivaxacis Frons. Also known as ‘nature’s band-aid.’ It becomes sticky after a bit of water and helps open wounds close up.”

The long strip of flora wrapped around the dragon’s waste like a belt, hiding the gash in his side.

“That’s... actually pretty cool!” Gilda said in amazement.

Spike looked back towards what remained of his cave, letting out a tired sigh. “Guess I better start looking for a new home.”

“I’m sorry about all of this.” Gilda said softly lowering her head.

“You? Sorry? That’s new. Besides, wasn’t it your job? Not that that’s much of an excuse.”

“Exactly. I could have just let you go with the necklace, but I had to be a jerk about it.”

Spike shrugged as he walked towards the edge of the cave. “It’s fine. All in the past now right? At least we’re both alive!”

“Yeah, but I’m the one that nearly got us both killed anyways.” Gilda sighed.

“Tell you what. You let me go with the necklace and we forget this ever happened?” The dragon said as he extended a claw towards her.

Gilda hesitated, eyeing the claw warily.

“You... still want the brooch?” Spike asked in disbelief.

“No. It’s just... this may sound weird, but those long hours we talked and helped each other were... nice? fun? I don’t know, but I liked it. Besides the whole nearly dying part of course. I don’t want to forget that.”

Spike looked at the griffin in shock, then smiled. “You know, you’re the only company I’ve had since I left Ponyville. Despite the uh... cold reception, I enjoyed talking to you too.”

The dragon extended his claw once again. “How about you let me go, and we forget about the fight?”

Gilda gladly took Spike’s claw, giving it a firm shake. “You got yourself a deal.”

A second of silence lingered between the two as they broke their clawshake.

“So... I guess this is it?” asked Gilda with a small hint of sadness.

“Yeah I guess so. I’m going to get something to eat then start looking for a new cave. One that’s not so close to the Griffin Kingdom’s border!” Spike laughed.

“I suppose I’ll just go back to Lionsberg and report that you moved out then.”

“Mission accomplished huh?”

“Heh, yeah.” Gilda spread her wings to take off, then suddenly folded them back. “Hey, how will I know where to find you?”

“Find me?” Spike asked in confusion.

“You know if you ever wanted to maybe talk some more or just hang out.. I mean it must be pretty lonely out here right?” Gilda squeezed her eyes shut. She was usually in complete control of any conversation she got herself in to. To her, this was borderline begging.

To her surprise, Spike gave her the same warm smile as before. “Give me one of your feathers?”

The griffin gave him a curious look, then quickly reached up to her chest and plucked out one of her white feathers.

“What do you need it for?” She asked as she handed it to the dragon.

“Once I settle in, I’ll send you my location through fire breath using this feather as a gateway. Pretty nifty huh?”

“I never even knew you could do that! I thought your fire was just for roasting stuff!”

“Nope! Full of surprises ain’t I?”

“Hey! We’re supposed to forget about that remember?” Gilda said jokingly as she softly punched the dragon’s arm.

“Woops. I’ll have to remember to forget next time!” Spike laughed.

For a split second the two were locked in a silent gaze, both of their smiles that had seemingly been forever robbed of them now reflected in each others’ eyes.

Gilda looked away as a wave of heat rose up into her face. “Well, see ya.” She said quickly as she took off from the cave.

“Have a safe flight home!” Spike called.

“Hey!” Gilda shouted, looping back around to hover just a few feet away from the

dragon's face. "You *better* not forget to send me that message, or I'll come looking for you myself!"

Spike's eyes widened at the griffin's ferocity. "Definitely won't forget now!"

"Good!" Gilda smiled as she took off straight into the air and out of the dragon's sight.

'Hasn't changed a bit.' Spike sighed, but found himself smiling as well. *'But maybe that's not a bad thing.'*

[Chapter 2 →](#)