

I buried myself into the story I was writing for NaNoWriMo. Of course, it was still in the rough draft phase, but I didn't care. It wasn't like the teacher was grading us on grammar or spelling, as long as it had at least 5,000 words.

A knock on the door surprised me a bit. I looked up and saw one of the APs standing there. This interested me quite a bit since we never had an AP stop by our English class. So why was he here?

He mouthed the words, "he's here" to my English teacher. Made me wonder, who was "he"? My teacher nodded and stood in front of the class to give an announcement.

"Guys, we will be having a new student in our class. Just so you know, he's... different. I don't want to hear any reports that any of you guys are bullying or harassing him, because if I do, you are going straight to ISS. Is this clear?"

"Yes, sir," all of my classmates replied. My teacher waved his hand in a "come in" motion. After a few seconds, the new classmate entered.

He was a dragon.

An honest to goodness *dragon*.

His height was about six feet, eight inches tall. He had dark red scales and, strangely enough, fur. From what I could see, he had cream-colored fur running from his neck to his tail. His arms had tufts of fur on the elbows and wrists, and his feet were covered with the fur, too.

Two large wings hung from out of his shirt. They had light gray membranes, and the "skeleton" of the wings were also covered in fur. At his feet, a thick, red tail twitched nervously, even more cream-colored fur at the end of it. He had four long horns out of the back of his head. The top horns curved backwards, but the bottom two curved down and forward, like a ram's. He had hair (the same color as his fur, no surprise) that fell all the way down to his shoulders.

Everybody sat in silence. We were sitting in front of a dragon, a creature of myth and legend. I was a bit paralyzed, both in shock and in glee. I was one of those guys who vehemently believed that dragons existed, but nobody would believe me. So when I found myself standing in front of one of them, I was filled with sheer joy.

My teacher turned to him. "How about you introduce yourself?" he asked.

"Oh, yeah," he said. I was a bit surprised by his voice. It wasn't what I expected. I thought he would have a deeper voice, but, instead, he sounded like a regular human.

"My name is Leo Muliere," he said. "I am 15 years old, and I am new to this state. As you can see, I am a dragon."

There was an uncomfortable silence in the room. It seemed nobody knew what to say to that, and Leo looked uncomfortable.

"Okay, thanks for the introduction, Leo," my teacher said. Then he turned to us. "Who is willing to sit by him?" My hand skyrocketed, a little too enthusiastically. Leo walked over and I pulled out a chair for him to sit in. I made sure that the back had space in it for his wings and tail.

"Thanks," he said, sitting down.

"No problem," I replied. I held out my hand. "My names Kari, by the way."

Leo shook my hand with his oversized dragon paw. "Nice to meet you," he replied.

"Wait, are we supposed to sit in the same classroom as this guy for another seven months?" One guy asked.

"Yes, you are," my teacher replied. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"Yeah, actually."

"Then you can leave. Right now," the teacher shot back, pointing towards the classroom door. My classmate stood up and stormed off.

I looked at Leo. He looked hurt because somebody didn't accept him. Then he straightened up and began doing his assignment.

"Hey man, sorry 'bout that," I told him, putting my hand on his shoulder.

"Yeah, I'm used to it," he replied. "You sort of have to be in this condition."

I nodded. "I understand how that would feel."

The rest of the class period was devoted to reading *Romeo and Juliet* aloud. We got to Act 2, Scene 1, but then the bell rang and we had to leave. "Hey, wanna go meet my dad?" I asked him.

"Sure," Leo replied. We headed upstairs and I ducked into my dad's classroom. He taught science at our high school, so I stayed in his room for about a half hour after school each day, give or take.

After a few minutes, my brother, Donovan, walked in. "Hey, Kari. Did you hear? Apparently, there's a drag-" He stopped speaking when he saw Leo. "THERE'S A DRAGON IN OUR SCHOOL!" he shouted. Leo covered his ears with his paws.

"Yeah, his name is Leo. And try not to scream so loud, dragon hearing is pretty sensitive," I told him.

"Sorry, but there's a dragon in our school?!"

"Yeah," Leo answered.

"Okay, umm, what's your schedule?" Donovan asked. Leo pulled out a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to him. Donovan looked through the schedule. "Hey, Kari," he said, motioning me closer, "his schedule is almost the same as yours."

"Really?" I ask, looking at it. Sure enough, we shared most of our classes. I nod.

"Wait, that's seriously cool," Leo replied.

We spent the next few minutes chatting. Then my dad walked in.

"Hey, Kari? Have you heard about that dragon?" he asked.

"Yeah. Dad, meet Leo. Leo, meet my dad." My dad jumped when he saw Leo. I wasn't surprised, any dragon looks a little frightening the first time you see one. Leo held out his paw to shake.

Dad reluctantly took it. "Yeah, um, nice to meet you... what's your name again?"

"Leo."

"Yeah, Leo," he said to himself. "So, what grade are you?"

"I'm a freshman," Leo replied. "My family moved here last month."

"Do you have any classes with Kari?" he asked.

"We have identical schedules, Dad. How cool is THAT?!" I shouted. Leo cringed a little and I quieted down.

"Wait. identical... what?" Dad asked, looking between the two of us.

"Yeah. They're practically the same," I confirmed. "Here, you can look." I grabbed the paper from Donovan's hands and showed it to my Dad.

My dad studied the schedule. His brows knitted together as he looked through the list of classes. His frown became obvious by the end. I wasn't the only one to notice. Leo hung his head.

My dad gave Leo's schedule back to me. "I'm not sure I trust a... a *dragon* in our school. Let alone your classes."

"What? But, Dad, he's sentient and safe! Why n-"

"It's okay, Kari. I get this all the time," Leo interrupted. He walked over to my dad and handed him a thick wad of papers. "Listen. When I was 8, people found out who I was. I got taken to D.C., and there was a huge scandal about me for 3 years. After endless debates, I was finally declared safe. But I have to take these papers with me wherever I go. Those are basically visas to allow me to live in this country. Understand?"

"Wait, what?" I asked, a crazy idea forming in my mind. "How come it took 8 years?"

"I'd rather not talk about it," Leo growled. "It was a rough three years. I've said all that I'm allowed to say, so don't ask me any more questions."

"Okay."

My dad shook his head and handed Leo back his papers. "Still not comfortable with the idea."

Suddenly, we heard a loud beep over the intercom. "Leo Muliere, your parents are here to pick you up."

"Gotta go," he told us, walking out of the door.

"Hold on, you're the first dragon that I've ever seen in person. I need a way to contact you," I blurted out.

"Ummm, okay?" he said, showing his phone number to me. I jotted it down on a piece of notebook paper. Then he left.

"Kari, you're really lucky," Donovan said. "Now you have four dragon friends. And how much do I have? None."