

Sunlight bathed the meadow in its warmth, as light and fluffy clouds slowly and aimlessly drifted by overhead. Taking a deep breath, the scent of pine and the light aroma of wildflowers that painted the gently sloping hills filled Dorian's lungs. It was a pleasant smell, perhaps one of the very reasons he came to the peaceful meadows in the first place... well that and the rather breathtaking view of the mountains in the distance made for a serene little spot for breakfast. Somewhere in the distance, Dorian could hear birds singing a beautiful little melody as he plodded heavily along. His every footstep produced a satisfying crackle as dry grass and twigs bent to his weight. *If I were about three decades younger*, Dorian thought to himself, *I would've woken with the sun to catch the birds' symphony when they'd just begun, rather than having to catch their ballad as it came to an end.* Dorian shook his head a little as he thought. *These old bones just ain't what they used to be.*

Every now and then, Dorian would paw at the ground with his shovel-like claws in search of the juicy roots he sought. Occasionally even using the large horn that sat atop his snout to clear away foliage in his way whenever his view had gotten a little too obscured. Lowering his large head to sniff at the ground, every breath he took kicked up small clouds of loose dirt as his search continued.

Although Dorian's large frame easily rose above the tall grass, the meadow held plenty of secrets hidden just beneath the noses of those who visited. Concealed within the grass, Rauchin slowly yet effortlessly crept forward, making nary a sound as he did so. Considering hunting even a lone sty without a pack as difficult was more than an understatement, but driven by desperation, Rauchin had little choice. At the mere thought of even a mouthful of sty meat—any meat, made his stomach cramp painfully with impatient desire, and his mouth water in such abundance it began to dribble from his lips. It was either eat whatever he could get his claws on, or face starvation... and the old bull before him looked like a laughably easy meal.

Crunching down on the roots he sought, Dorian sighed slightly in delight, savoring the crisp, earthy, and slightly zesty taste he'd yearned for all morning. However when bowing his head for another bite, a new scent filled Dorian's nostrils. A scent that told him he wasn't alone, that something was wrong... Slowly Dorian scanned the horizon, red eyes straining to see whatever predator that hid among the forest treeline. What he missed however, was the figure snaking through the grass growing ever closer and closer.

Without warning, the charcoal scaled raptor burst from the long grass right in front of his snout. Dorian only had seconds to react, rearing up into his hind legs and turning to avoid the raptor's jaws from latching onto his throat. Luckily, or perhaps unluckily for Rauchin, the raptor missed. As Rauchin recovered from the miss, it was his turn to narrowly evade a counterattack and slip back into the tall grass as Dorian kicked out with his hind legs.

For a moment, Dorian lost the raptor as a silence the old bull hadn't even noticed up until now settled over the meadow. No serenade of bird song, no dull droning buzz of cicadas, not even the hushed rustle of foliage as he searched for any sort of movement. The only sound present in the stillness was Dorian's soft panting. Unappeased, Dorian grunted in effort as he plunged his

horn deep into the foliage before him, throwing his large head to the side, tearing roots from the ground, and showing grass in dirt as he searched for Raichin.

“Show yourself ya damn vermin!” Dorian spat, “Don’t think I ain’t aware of your games!”

Raichin kept low as he slinked through the tall grass, slowly circling behind Dorian to keep away from the sty’s horn. Even then, one good kick from his hind legs could break a bone if he wasn’t lucky... at least a broken bone was preferable to a fatal puncture wound. Waiting, watching, Raichin looked for an opportunity. However, feeling his stomach cramp painfully once again brought a small but muffled whine from the raptor. Growing impatient, Raichin took his chances.

A sudden hiss, followed by a sharp pain in his side as the raptors’ sickle claws dug into tough hide told Dorian the raptor had returned. With a grunt, Dorian began to buck wildly, twisting and turning every which direction in an attempt to shake the raptor from his back. Although not quite as spry as the sty once was, Raichin could feel the power behind each kick. Unable to help but give a small grunt himself, his grip slipping a little as one of his sickle claws was forcibly dislodged.

“Shit—!” Raichin swore under his breath, nearly losing his hold on the thrashing sty. However he wasn’t going down without a fight, determined to bring Dorian down Raichin sunk his teeth into the back of the sty’s neck. Managing to change his position as the sty bucked, using the momentum to get himself up onto Dorian’s back.

Bucking was quickly proving itself futile, as no matter how hard Dorian tried, the raptor just wasn’t budging. At this rate, he’d sooner tire himself than shake the pesky predator... With an irritated snort, Dorian reared up onto his hind legs once more and allowed gravity to take him. Falling backward, it was safe to say he took Raichin by surprise, his heavy body falling backward and crushing the raptor with a heavy thud. Using the momentum from the fall, Dorian managed to roll back to his feet and canter a short distance away.

Raichin lay in agony, having survived by some miracle but in all honesty just wishing he would’ve met his end right there and then. Pain ripped through his body with every breath he took, every pitiful gasp for air set his lungs ablaze. For the time being, all Raichin could do was lay there and watch Dorian canter away... until the sty began to turn, slowing only for a moment to a trot as he rounded an invisible corner.

*Get up... get up, for the love of god please get up...* Raichin desperately pleaded with his own body, attempting to move only sending another wave of searing pain coursing through his body. The closer Dorian got, the slower time seemed to move. Raichin’s heart began to hammer in his chest, thumping so hard against broken ribs it felt like it was going to burst straight through his chest. *He’s going to kill me... get up!*

With adrenaline surging through his veins and stifling the blinding pain, Rauchin managed to roll out of the way right as Dorian's feet came crashing down with such force they left an imprint of his feet into the ground directly where the raptor was once laying.

"Where do you think you're goin' boy?!" Dorian's mockingly gleeful voice called, yet even that did little to buffer the disgusted and aggressive edge that lined his words. It'd be a lie to say it wasn't amusing to watch the terrified raptor scramble to his feet with such haphazard speed, he tripped over his own feet as he began to flee.

"Fine... have it your way..." Dorian began to walk after the injured raptor, giving a soft hum as he did so. To be honest, there was always something so amusing yet ironic about watching a predator run away with their tail tucked between their legs. Watching them turn so cowardly after so arrogantly proclaiming themselves the lord of death, to hold themselves so proudly to the idea that they were the ones who decided who lived, and who died... it was almost poetic in a way.

Gradually, Dorian's leisurely stroll quickened into a hearty trot, then a canter, and finally a gallop. The sound of rapidly approaching hooves grew louder and louder with each step behind Rauchin as the old bull thundered across the prairie. Any dinosaur in their right mind would stay clear of a charging sty, Rauchin was no different, pushing his body to its utter limit as he fought to get away. Every desperate, greedy gulp of air made the raptor's lungs feel as though they were on fire, every step caused wave after wave of searing pain coursing through his veins. He could *feel* the sty's hot breath down the back of his neck as the field seemed to stretch and distort, no matter how fast Rauchin ran the tree line always seemed to be just out of reach. Dorian didn't have to be the fastest on the field, just faster than the sick, the elderly... or the injured.

Blitzing through the pines that rimmed the prairie, one awkward step sent Rauchin tumbling to the ground. Dorian meanwhile came to a skidding halt just before the treeline, kicking up dust in the process as his heavy body ground to a sudden stop. Red eyes rimmed with a dark dingo burned like hot embers on a pyre of hatred as the old bull snorted in frustration, left to watch as his prey escaped further into the safety of the forest.

"Vermin..." Dorian muttered in a low snarled drawl, backing away from the forest, "I'll get you next time..."