

1
LET ME TELL

Let me tell you, I know you all are reading this chronicle only because you're trying to find out all of her bad sides, all of her mistakes, in hope to tear her down and demonstrate that you were right all the damn time.

Let me tell you, I know you only want confirmation of her bad actions. But If you let me, I will portray all of her sides: the good ones, the bad ones, and everything that has been in-between.

Let me tell you, I know you all are sitting there with fire in your eyes, ruminating on vengeance and on how to find out where that dragon is hiding.

So let me show you the way, let me enlighten your eyes with what has never been told about the Genocider of the Dew wings.

It has always been only a matter of luck that you have never known the truth.



2 LUCK

Eerie had never been a lucky dragon, in fact, she had always been quite the unfortunate one.

First and foremost, her scales were as thin as glass and equally fragile, constantly patterned with bruises and wounds.

It was the first thing her body reminded her of in the mornings, a new hematoma on the wrist, a cut on the snout, a bleeding talon.

As she unraveled herself of the morning dew that covered her body, yawning and exposing icy-white fangs, the sun came to welcome her by caressing her snout and blessing her closed eyelids.

She wasn't what you would call a pretty dragon: washed-out colors, thin horns, a spiky ribcage that stuck out awkwardly on her thin skin.

Though you wouldn't have called her ugly either, not at all: sapphire eyes, iridescent scales with specks of gold, wings as black as the night, with a million star-like scales that formed shapeshifting drawings of auroras.

She wore no jewelry.

While she trotted from her den to the side of the mangrove forest a magpie fled in front of her and let out a loud call.

Eerie looked in the direction the bird flew away from, hearing weird rustles and labored breathing, when a pair of sharp fangs bursted out of the leaves and yelled:

-EERIE!-

Eerie recoiled and fell on her back legs:

-two MOONS EZRA! you're going to make my heart STOP if you continue scaring me like that!-

Ezra was half-hidden in the branches, golden eyes and emerald green scales glimmered under the green light of the trees.

He was roughly Eerie's age, and he was a thorn in the side most of the times she tried to have a civil conversation.

The thought of having to deal with all of Ezra's energy (that was now hanging from the trees like a big green bat) just gave her the itches.

-Today you look even more tired than yesterday, how is that possible?- The dragonet asked. Eerie rolled her eyes.

-it's called stress man, don't think you know what it is since you spend your days hanging from the branches like the laziest of the Icewings-

Ezra looked at Eerie for a moment, a hilariously confused expression painted on his snout:

-But Eerie, Icewings aren't lazy.-

The black dragon gave him a condescending smile:

-Then think about how rare your laziness must be! One of a kind!- she exclaimed while walking away.

Ezra shook his head like he always did after getting an insult too complicated for him to even try to understand, and dropped himself from the branches onto the ground before following Eerie on the Path of Rain.

The Path or Rain was Eerie's favorite section of the inflorescence she lived in: it was a mosaic-like trail made of beautiful sea glass that tiled the whole track and glittered in the sunlight as the low tide covered it with a few talons of water.

The tall mangrove trees all around it created a tunnel of dappling emerald and gold light that danced onto the path in a show of secret shapes and colors that only the Earth itself knew how to direct.

Ezra liked to stomp his talons while walking on The Path, splashing water all over Eerie, who closed her eyes in frustration and carried on, trying to ignore the growing cluster of irritation that was forming in her chest.

-Do you ever think about it?-

Eerie huffed: -About what.-

Ezra suddenly stopped splashing and looked over the thin layer of water that covered the outermost side of the inflorescence: - About how easy it would be for the four moons to just orbit a little closer to us, and destroy something as delicate and precious as the Path.-

Eerie stopped abruptly and quickly circled back to the point where Ezra was. She looked at him dead in the eyes, glared back at the landscape, and snapped:

-I actually never think about it. Do you know why? because the moons stay where they are, the tide is constant, and I'm late for the meeting.-

That said, she began running through the Path, careful not to slip over the smooth glass.

She knew it was almost a sin for the DewWings to fly over the Path of Rain.

The huge mosaic had been tiled back centuries ago by the original night-leaf couple, the Wise NightWing Duskspeaker and the Sly LeafWing Datura. Every sleepless night they passed under the roof of Mangroves, mourning their friends and family. They went and searched for sea glass in the nearby waters and used every piece of it to create a path that connected them to the forests.

Some dismissively say that the Path was created by an Animus enchantment, but Eerie for sure knew that it had been created by pure love and mourning for what had and could've been.

That's why whoever cradles the importance of memories in the Colony only walks on the Path, appreciating the gift the founders left behind.

Ezra looked back at the thin figure of Eerie running on the water that left intermittent splashes behind.

He honestly thought Eerie was one, if not the most, stupid dragon to ever live in the colony, but he knew too well that for some reason unknown to him, the Elders seemed to have a different idea.



3
FANGS

Atheris was awkwardly sitting on a moss bed too small for her, shrinking her ink-black wings closer to her greenish body, her night blue eyes glared anxiously all over the council room: a circular wooden structure built inside the roots of the biggest mangrove of the Inflorescence, decorated with lush plants and gold-tinted silk curtains drawn at the sides of the council's spots; five moss piles were placed behind thin stone plates equipped with slim brushes used for writing who knows what.

Dragons from all over the colony were gathered at the sides of the room, barely leaving space for the narrow track that led in front of the council's spots.

Atheris could see pitch black wings and bright green and aqua bodies pressed together in a room that couldn't hold all of them.

A LeafWing with a particularly intricate gold earring and a smug expression passed in front of her and said: -Where is your daughter, Atheris? Still running around without a role in the colony?- her smug expression created little creases with the shape of a crow's feet around her eyes.

Atheris' expression became sour as she spat out: -Eerie has worked hard for this day, we'll see what the Queen has decided for her.-

The other dragon lowered her eyebrows and giggled obnoxiously: -If she doesn't get nominated, you know Stickbug has an extra place in their vivarium, right?-

Atheris puffed up her chest and opened her wings as much as the space around allowed her to and whispered in irritation: - Have a good Midsun, Hedera.- as she invited her to leave.

Hedera let out a swirl of smoke and walked away, without further comments

Atheris massaged her snout with her wing claws while thinking about the many ways she could've fought that wrinkly dragon.

The room smelled like freshly watered grass, forest moss, and rain. The DewWings aren't named like that for nothing, Atheris thought, with the hint of a smirk.

She was still covering her head with her wings when finally Eerie's snout decided to show up:

-Oooh, you're lucky I am your mother, or else I would've left this morning.- The dragon said, giving Eerie a menacing look while trying to put her flaring frills back down and give herself a dignified appearance.

-I'm sorry mom, Ezra found me on the way here and decided to talk to me about moons and orbbrits and stuff- Eerie replied, sitting by her mother's left side.

-I think you mean orbits dear, and you should listen to Ezra, he's a wise little dragon.- Atheris seemed calmer now that her daughter was finally there.

-Eh, if he didn't try to kill me every time by jumping out of nowhere, I think I could kind of tolerate him.- Eerie shrugged.

Her mother's look dimmed, she was about to say something else when a thin mist unraveled from the council's tables, the signal that the gathering was about to start.

Eerie only went to those reunions because she knew the council liked her, and she always wished for them to assign her to a hunting patrol.

She never got to one, they all believed she was best suited for less dangerous roles, but she would've only accepted the role she wanted.

Every time the council nominated her for a role, she rejected and waited for the next gathering to be nominated for a hunting patrol, and now she was about to be too old to even get a regular role.

Today was the day after she turned seven years old, meaning that she had one last chance to be nominated Seeker.

-Good Midsun, dragons of the DewWings, today we are here to discuss our usual program- the voice of an old dragon echoed over the mumbles of the dragons in the room, even if Eerie couldn't see her from the back of all those horns and heads, she knew the voice belonged to Foglia, the current Queen of the DewWings.

As the murmuring went on, Atheris whispered to Eerie: -It's gonna be okay, you're going to get nominated, no fear... no worries, okay?-

-Mom, I think you're only making me more worried by saying this.-

The other dragon recoiled slightly and waited a moment to ponder her words: - Oh you're right, sorry.-

A few moments passed between them as they distractedly listened to the council discussing something about loose embankments near the rivers.

-Actually, I don't think I'll be nominated any more mom. I'll be rejected from the tribe and I'll have to migrate to Phyrria and hide with the Rainwings.-

-Oh stop it, Queen Foglia is rightful and just, she'll propose a nice role to you.-

-But I don't want to be stuck my whole life picking up flowers with Stickbug!-

Eerie yelled. A few dragons looked at them annoyed and an old and cranky DewWing shushed them with an extremely long -Shhhhhhh-

Atheris looked around and lowered her voice: - Eerie, you will accept any role, or I will be the one accepting for you, understood? I can't risk losing my only daughter.-

Eerie looked at her mother with a miserable expression and nodded sadly.

-We are now going to nominate the new roles for our youth.- The voice of the Nightwing NightBloomer said. The dragon looked over the crowd quietly.

A shiver of excitement and anxiety rushed through Eerie's veins, making her heart feel tight and her sight blurry.

The members called the names of a couple of three-year-old dragonets, to then pass onto the older ones, some of them got called to join the healer's dens, some got assigned to hut construction, and others to gather plants and foods.

A five years old dragon got assigned to the seekers, Eerie's ears popped up and listened closely: apparently he was named Bell Flower, and this was his first nomination.

She couldn't help but feel a wave of jealousy.

Queen Foglia now was about to announce the last dragon of the nomination. Eerie's stomach sank when she realized she could've also not been called at all.

Long minutes passed as Eerie's dread unraveled from her heart and made her talons feel heavy.

The old dragon cleared her throat and said: -Today we add a new face to our lines. Come to us, Iridessa, second born of Atheris and CloudChanter-

Eerie didn't even realize at first, her mother gasped and patted her on the back with her wings.

The dragonet looked around and jumped away from her mother's side onto the path that led to the platform in front of the council.

Her head was a buzzing of feelings and thoughts, everything looked smothered and confused like a ruined painting.

As Eerie walked in between the space left for the dragonets, she saw Ezra's face in the crowd. She realized that all of this time, he still hadn't been called for a role. Time was running for him too.

As she walked up to the lifted platform the dragons sat on, she let her gaze observe all of the members.

Foglia was simply stunning, she had always been the most beautiful dragon of the Dewwings, even now that she was one of the oldest in the colony. Her body was tiled with shades of Jade and Turquoise, along with massive black wings decorated with specks of glass and gems that shone in the membrane, enhanced by the green light that filtered through the leaf-covered windows.

She wore a crown made of stained glass, with a single white opal at the center.

Eerie scanned the other familiar faces, Night Bloomer with his dark brown eyes and yellow-colored wings, Glass Leaf with her usual smirk and fire-scorched claws, Fern Wings that nodded encouragingly, making his golden earrings bob playfully.

Eerie fixated her gaze back onto Foglia's warm look, that nodded imperceptibly:

-Iridessa of the DewWings, do you swear to always serve this community to the best of your abilities, to not let anything stop you from protecting the beauty we created, to sacrifice your own life for the safety of our people?-

Eerie nodded -I swear with my blood.-

Foglia unsheathed a black dagger with a curved blade and gave it to Eerie, who had barely let the sharp knife touch her shoulder's skin that started to copiously bleed, staining the blade with a brilliant scarlet.

Foglia then took a little vial hidden in a pouch she wore at the thigh, and caught Eerie's blood into it, to then give it to Fern Wings, who closed the wax cap by breathing a tongue of fire on it. Eerie took the little glass and bowed profusely, to then hear Foglia say:

-Now rise up, spread your night blessed wings and come here to reclaim your title as Seeker!-

Eerie's heart skipped a beat and her pale blue eyes filled with a layer of tears as she pressed her head on the ground and bowed even more profusely.

The Queen walked behind her stone plate and grabbed a graceful bracelet made of glass and moonstone, held together by threads of copper.

She let it slide onto Eerie's talons while saying:

-Do you accept your role as Seeker?-

Eerie gulped and said with a shaky breath: - I do.-

Queen Foglia let out an imperceptible sigh of relief and breathed out

-Welcome to the DewWings, Seeker of Light, Daughter of the Night, Iridessa.-

Eerie now wore jewelry.



4
EYELIDS

Iridessa kind of hated how her name sounded: too regal, too graceful, too much time spent on pronouncing the -dee- and the -esssssa-, too many stares in one room when it was pronounced out loud.

So she shortened it to Eerie, -eerieedessa- should've been the appropriate pronunciation, but she liked Eerie. It scared away dragons that were too annoying looking and left a mysterious aura.

It was the day after, and Eerie was walking down the Path again, this time wanting to reach the council spot before running into any obstacle whose name started with -E- and ended with -zra-

While she was quickly running on a Path that wasn't made to be run on, she slipped and fell on her side, skidding for a couple of feet under the ill-concealed chuckles of passers-by. Her glass scales didn't help shield her from the fall, so as she got up and shook her dazed head, ripples of sap-like blood mixed with the water.

Eerie looked at the color fading into the Path, and wondered how much blood it would've taken for the waters to be the same dusk red shade as hers.

She got drawn away by her thoughts as the rising sun peeked over the horizon and flooded her talons with gold, glittering on the new hematoma she gained. The LeafWing started walking as fast as she could, awkwardly curling her talons to grip onto the sea glass stones. A baffled Ezra was waiting for her on the other side, barely being able to stand on his own legs as he folded with uncontrollable laughter: -Eerie you got your life all wrong, forget the Seekers, you should've been in some kind of comedy theater because this was the funniest thing I've seen alllll year.-

-Oh shut your pee-colored snout please, you're making my already low sympathy for you shrivel up and die.-

Ezra stepped closer: -Wow, have you even slept at all miss Seeker? You look tired-

-Ezra, please just let me get to the damn council room, or I'll have to call Stickbug to help me get rid of you.-

Ezra exaggerated a shiver and acted as if he was about to faint: -Oh no! Not Stickbug! I'd rather throw myself into the piranha pool with rocks attached to my limbs!- he screamed.

Eerie awkwardly hid her laughter and bit her tongue.

Even if she would've never admitted it, Ezra had the potential to be funny sometimes.

Only sometimes though.

-We could stay here and exchange sharp jokes all day, or you could follow me into the council room and take a look at how adults handle things.-

The dragon looked up to Eerie, a sudden admiring look glimmered in his eyes:

-Are you.. are you like forreal.-

Eerie chuckled: -Yeah forreal Ezra, at least I'll be able to keep an eye on you, I'm sure your mother will thank me too.-

Ezra jumped next to Eerie's side, with a rigid pose that must've been an imitation of a soldier's stance, and whispered: -I won't let anyone know about this, captain. You can count on me because we're captain and soldier now, the secrets of the Seekers bind us in the tighter of vows.-

Eerie shook her head and swiftly patted Ezra on the wings before moving onto the little dirt path that led to their destination.

The two stepped into the room of the Seekers, a structure whose hardwood walls were patched with furs and skins of all kinds of animals: bears, crocodiles, feathers of the birds of the marshes, and more creatures that Eerie did not recognize.

The walls also exhibited a wide range of throwing knives, daggers, teeth coverings that were used to inject venom, and some bizarre creations Eerie could only interpret as a mass of wires and spikes.

Ezra, meanwhile, looked as if he was about to have a heart failure, glaring at the room and trying to absorb the view all at once.

In the middle of the room, there was a handful of dragons, a NightWing that looked as if he had just drank a gallon of saltwater, a bubbly and tall dragon that reminded Eerie of the black moonstone gems, two menacing-looking NightWings that had the words -I will kill you- imprinted on their foreheads (must've been siblings), the wiry figure of the small dragonet named Bell Flower and some older members that didn't bother to look back when Eerie and Ezra entered the room.

Salt Face walked up to them and growled

-You must have forgotten that this is the Seeker's Celebration Room, little Sprout.-

Eerie narrowed her eyes and clenched her jaw while Ezra slowly backed behind her:

-Sir, I'm not a little Sprout, I'm here to train as a Seeker of Light, more specifically for the Daughters of the Night congregation.-

The NightWings stared at her in silence for interminable minutes, to then finally say: -No you're not.-

Eerie rolled her eyes.

-Wow, It took you quite a while to form all those big difficult words in your head.-

Salt Face's snout wrinkled in a growl, uncovering fangs as sharp as the growing moon.

Eerie then held her talons up high in-between their snouts, showing the glass bracelet and saying: -Name's Eerie, if you may. And I'd like to be referred to as your colleague, not as Sprout.-

Black-Moonstone silently popped up from behind Salt Face's figure and softly said: -Dream Stealer, I think I may have forgotten to update you on what seemed to be the incoming welcoming of a new rookie besides Bell Flower.-

Dream Stealer looked back into Black Moonstone's eyes and softened his gaze as he whispered: -Silencer, are you out of your mind? You should've told me as soon as you heard!-

Silencer walked around the Nightwing and sat in front of him, shielding their conversation with her wings, Eerie only heard a couple of words like -Queen Foglia?- -Daughter of who?- -Cloud CHANTER?!- and an aggressive -Shhh-.

-Are you guys plotting murder under there or can we get a tour of this place before Midsun?- Eerie said.

Dream Stealer popped up from behind Silencer's wings and said with what seemed to be an attempt at a gentle tone of voice:

-Your name is Iridessa.- Eerie felt the blood rise up to her ears and talons as she uncovered her fangs and snapped:

-I've told you, it's Eerie.-

-Yeah, sure, whatever..we don't have the time to pronounce all of that anyways. Welcome to the Seekers, Eerie.- the Nightwing said with a hasty tone.

-And who's the little one?- Silencer gently asked, hinting at Ezra's half-hidden figure.

-Oh that's Ezra-

-You know you can leave your partner at home while you're working, right?-

Dream Stealer said with a vaguely amused expression.

-Oh yeah, I know why do you...-

Eerie stopped herself mid-sentence, the gears in her brain visibly rotating, to then distort her face into a perfect expression of disgust: -oh NO NO NO FOR PHERIA AND ULTIO'S SAKE YOU DID NOT JUST ASSUME THAT.-

Ezra came out of hiding, and confusingly whispered: -What are they talking about?-

Eerie pointed at him dramatically with a wing and screamed: -He is S I X!-

Ezra looked at her, visibly offended: -Hey don't act as if you didn't turn seven yesterday you treacherous liar!-

Dream Stealer was now trying to hold himself together while the other dragons of the congregation came to see what was causing all that yelling.

Silencer rolled her eyes and opened her starless black wings:

-Okay okay, you all stop now. Dream Stealer, your humor equals that of a one-year-old dragonet. Eerie, a two-day age gap isn't going to make the sky fall. Now, if everyone agrees, may we go back to our training and give this new recruit a nice welcome?-

The group of dragons chuckled and walked to the big scroll that hung at the end of the room to check for the patrol turns of the day.

Eerie was so excited she couldn't help but let a wide smile brighten her face.

It was the first time Ezra ever saw her do that.



5
MANGROVES

Silencer sat behind a dummy, looking at Eerie straight in the eyes with a sudden severe expression that clashed with her kind eyes, while the rookie tried to hit it with some wood knives:

-Are you caressing it or something? A scavenger with a spoon would've been able to do more damage than you. Try again.-

Eerie groaned in frustration: -Can't I use my teeth? Or talons? Or literally anything else other than these obnoxious toothpicks?-

-No, again.- Silencer simply said, flicking her tail towards the jute dummy.

Ezra was watching in silence from Eerie's right.

-You look like you're trying to communicate with it. Retry.- Silencer commented.

-Then just let me fight with someone! I'm way better at that!- Eerie roared.

-Not with those fish scales, you'd be bleeding to death all over the bear furs.- Again.

Ezra turned his head from Eerie to Silencer, his tail moving anxiously as he felt his captain grip the floor with her claws.

-My scales don't determine my worth as a fighter. Is that why you've been torturing me with this dummy instead of letting me do the fighting? - She spat out between her closed teeth, ignoring Silencer's command.

Silencer shrugged and circled around Eerie: -Maybe. Or maybe you just need to learn that work and training comes before the fun stuff, again.-

-Oh trust me, I've been training double as hard as anyone in this room, it took me all of the four years of role-giving to be finally accepted here.-

-Doesn't mean you've been approved by me, again.-

The LeafWing snorted and looked at the wood knife in her talons, then back to Silencer. Her frills slowly rose as her irritation did.

-Oh, she's plotting something. I can feel it.- Ezra whispered to himself.

Eerie walked up to the rack of knives attached to the wall and jabbed her wooden one on a richly embroidered carpet. She stood up on her back legs and carefully chose between the lines.

She whipped out a dagger: it had a wavy, black blade with vine motifs gracefully imprinted on the ink-colored steel. The ebony hilt had magpies and moons carved on it, it seemed strong and flexible.

She gave a quick look at Silencer, who was following her movements with her eyes without saying a word, sitting on the cushions.

Eerie walked back to her spot and weighted the knife in her talon, turning it side to side while observing the dummy.

She pictured Salt Face as the dummy, carefully balancing her weight on her legs, wings and tail as she stood up on her hind legs, her talons gripping on the hardwood floor. She took a long deep breath and threw the knife as hard as she could. Her back legs slightly moved forward as the force of the throw brought her closer to the target, wings open, tail straight,

the black blade whirring as it traveled through the several feet that distanced her from the dummy, to then finally sink into the silk curtains draped behind Silencer, tearing them to pieces with a loud - riiiiip-.

Stillness fell on the room as Eerie's affront towards the older dragon sunk between them like a dying bird.

-Told you, I've been training double as hard.- Eerie hissed.

Silencer's expression turned into a mask of stone, her tail and wings slightly twitching in irritation, and said: - Very well then, since you want to put yourself in danger so bad, let's see how tough you really are.-

She pounced on Eerie without a sound, making her victim fall on her back as she opened her wings and wrapped her in a black void.

Silencer then covered Eerie's eyes with her big talons and with a wingbeat jumped out of the Seeker's mangrove.

Ezra stood still like a marble statue as he watched them disappear into the thick mist.

Muffled screams came from the LeafWing who was hissing and yelling while scratching Silencer with her talons without success.

Long minutes passed and Eerie seemed to not want to give up, her lungs filled with air as she screamed and insulted the NightWing, her wings beating and crumpling against the other dragon who was now dragging her around by the chest with her back legs.

Silencer then started beating her wings faster, rising higher and higher in the air, and when the air became difficult to breathe and little droplets of water started freezing on their bodies, she let go of Eerie, who suddenly found herself floating inside of a cloud, milky white mist surrounding her.

-Attack me- Silencer whispered from somewhere higher in the sky.

Eerie's breath was shaking, her wings beating weakly after all the shouting and wiggling.

She turned around a couple of times, spiraling lower and trying to find a point of reference.

As she gazed around the hazy clouds surrounding her, a talon grabbed her tail, yanking her several wings below. Her stomach twisted into a talonful of nails and sank below her feet as she found herself falling for long wingbeats in a growling mess with Silencer, Eerie smacking the attacker on the shout with her long talons, Silencer biting the LeafWing on the shoulder.

Eerie was now panicking, trying to think clearly of how to succeed in that unfair duel.

Not that anyone I've ever fought has ever been fair to me, she thought for a moment. She reached for Silencer's smooth horns and, kicking her on the stomach, she threw herself on the NightWing's back, reaching for her wings and trying to tear them in the opposite direction.

Silencer emitted a low growl as loud as a thunder, her throat glowing bright blue.

She turned around and tossed Eerie away with her huge tail, breathing fire just a few talons away from her face.

Eerie was hovering mid-air, trying to catch her breath while distancing herself from Silencer.

-That's enough, this was a pitiful show.- The NightWing commented.

Eerie looked at her and while catching her breath she said : -It wasn't, I almost had you.-

-That's right, almost.- Silencer looked at her with her kind eyes and turned around, flying back to the seeker's mangrove. Eerie thought with a sigh: 'she just attacked me out of nowhere, I could've still won.'

They landed back on the platform and Ezra observed Eerie's neck stained with bruises and bleeding scratches, to then shift his gaze onto Silencer's serious expression.

He tried to say something but Eerie's look was enough to dissuade him.

Dreamstealer came to them, his large shoulders looming over Ezra.

-Silencer?- He asked.

-Looks like we've got a tough one here, her pride is so strong she tried the panthera move on me.- She didn't even look at Eerie while saying those words.

The LeafWing held her chin up high, putting up a mask of defiance.

She felt heavy, her head pounding from the quick fighting and flying back, and her arms were shaking with shame for what she had done. She ignored all of those feelings because she knew she was deserving of that place in the Seekers, wasn't she? She had trained double as hard as anyone else in the whole room.

She was right.

-But it looks like your wings are still in place, don't they?- Dreamstealer observed, circling Silencer.

-That's right.- Silencer gazed at Eerie and trotted away without a sound.

Dreamstealer held himself for another moment, a smug expression on his snout.

Ezra looked at Eerie and didn't say a word while the Seeker's leader walked away and went to check on Bell Flower, who was doing an excellent job with her dummy.

-Damn, you screwed up on your first day.-

Ezra commented.

Eerie looked around and sighed.

-Yeah, honestly... I didn't- really expect that.-

Ezra raised his eyebrows -Then what did you expect would happen by doing that?-

Eerie paused for a long moment, reflecting carefully -I don't know, Thought she would've started to yell at me, that's it.-

Ezra looked at her in disbelief. He was about to say something else when the white and green speckled figure of Bell Flower showed up behind him, tapping him slightly on the shoulder and asking him to move.

-Silencer said you're obnoxious.- She announced.

-Yeah i figured- Eerie tilted her head to look at the tiny dragonets snout: thin wiry horns, a Nightwing looking neck circled by fern-like frills.

-She also said she wants you in next week's patrol.- She spat out, walking back to her place behind the jute dummy.

Ezra looked at Eerie's face and let out a crackling giggle:-Looks like she doesn't want you dead after all. I would for sure after what you've done.-

Dreamstealer sourly walked up to them, looking like a thousand hornet wasps just stung him on the tail.

-Pretty sure the little one told you already.-

Eerie nodded pridefully.

Dreamstealer sighed loudly and added: -We're going on a patrol on the next new moon, some insect dragons are being more annoying than usual, and we may need an extra pair of talons.-

Eerie stiffened at the sound of those words, her smile growinh larger.

-I don't guarantee you will be able to put even a talon on them, we will give priority to the oldest members. The BeetleWings have allied with the SkyWings, so we don't know what to expect.-

-Yes Chief, I won't cause any obstruction, I promise.-

Dream Stealer huffed a swirl of smoke in Ezra's direction: -We'll see that.- As Dream Stealer walked away, Silencer held herself another moment and whispered: - If I find out you get yourself killed the first day I put you in a patrol, I'll follow you in the afterlife and tell Pheria you wanted this yourself.-

Her eyes were shining with a sinister light.

Eerie gulped slowly and asked: -You... won't be there?-

Silencer ducked her head and hid a smile: -Of course not. Can't wait to see you slaughtered, Eerie.-

The rookie was about to ask her more, but as silent as a whisper, she vanished in the shadows.

-She doesn't look... trustful- Ezra commented, pointing to where Silencer disappeared.

-Do any of them do?- Eerie sighed while walking towards the silk curtains and taking the dagger out of the wall.

That evening the Sun was just a streak of red that stood out in the dark blue sky, shimmering onto the waters of the lakes and pools, giving them a sinister feeling.

Eerie had just been filled with saddlebags, pockets, and bracelets stacked with knives, cutting stars, unknown glass containers, and the magpie dagger.

She walked down in the dying light with Ezra by her side: -You can't come, I've told you already.-

Ezra was on the brink of tears, it would've been even comic if only Eerie could've shaken off that dooming feeling that gripped her heart and wings.

-You're making me exhausted, this has been a long week, and it's not even over. If something happened to you your mother would tear my eyes out of my skull.-

-But she doesn't have to know!- Ezra protested.

Eerie then just shoved him to the side: -I don't want to yell, today you were almost bearable, and I don't want to ruin that, Ezra.-

-I'm always bearable, YOU are the annoying one!-

-What did you say? Have you heard yourself talk? Or saw yourself with that stupid grin on your face every single day?-

Ezra closed his mouth for a moment and looked at Eerie's scales to then say:

-At least I'm not weak.-

Eerie's gaze turned to stone upon those words, a veil of disappointment in her eyes:

-I know what you're trying to do, please go home.-

-No- he said.

-WHY are you like this?- The Seeker whispered, on the brink of exhaustion.

Ezra roared and opened his wings in an attempt at looking bigger, he had grown the past months, but he was still a talon shorter than Eerie: -Because I want to see what it's like! I want to see the real world! Not this little puddle of rainbow rocks!-

Eerie slammed her tail near Ezra, breaking a mangrove's root and making the whole tree fold and crack.

-I'm trying to keep you alive so that you can see that someday! But you're too small, weak, and stupid to understand that!- She yelled, pointing at Ezra's face scar with a talon.

Ezra shut his mouth at those words and took a step backward, tracing his scar with his claws.

-But, you...-

-Just. Go home.-

He stared into her icy blue eyes, looking for a sign that she would've changed her mind, that she was joking, but after a couple of minutes of dead silence, he sighed and walked away dragging his tail.

Eerie tiredly smiled:

-Tell mother Alliance she better thank me for keeping you alive another day!-
Ezra walked away while hiding his tears.



Eerie hid the new hematoma that was forming on her tail as she walked to one of the -I'm going to kill you- siblings, this one was the female. She had a pretty black snout and yellow eyes, a nice shade of turquoise stained her figure, Eerie remembered she was named Ninphes.

The Seeker nodded in her direction as she sat near her and they all waited for Chief Salty Face to show up.

He had a striking beauty in the red light of the dying sun.

Eerie couldn't deny it. Strong shoulders and pitch-black scales that seemed to absorb all the colors of the world, his gray eyes shone with a dangerous reddish color.

He only had a short knife attached to his neck, the hilt was smooth ebony and the blade was straight.

Eerie felt really small compared to him, compared to everyone. It seemed like they all fit perfectly with their thick and black scales, gifted to them by the NightWing genes of the tribe, while her coat shone with all the wrong colors, she looked muddy and weirdly pale in the setting air, too fancy with the golden scales compared to the other Seekers simplicity, too many knives clanking against her talons as she moved.

-As I said earlier today, we're going to the border of the tribe to drive back the BeetleWings and SkyWings that wandered too close to our territory. As many of you know, Skywing fire is far stronger than ours, and Beetlewings have a various range of powers. Some of them have acid, some of them stingers, and many more, so try not to report deadly injuries. Those are a nuisance.-

How encouraging, Eerie thought.

They nodded in agreement as they followed the Chief into the dark forest.

The patrol was composed of Dream Stealer, the two siblings, a dark green dragon named Fang, a couple named Libra and Obsidian, and Eerie.

She walked behind everyone, closing the line while Dream Stealer marched ahead of the patrol.

Of course, Pheria forbid Eerie gets a chance to fight someone

They walked from the heart of the colony to the southern side where the trees were more spread apart and the savanna began to blend in the marsh they lived in.

Eerie moved a fern that blocked her path and noticed a bright red scale the color of blood.

SkyWings. She was about to call out to the group when she got hit in the head with what felt like a huge branch. Confused, she held her head with a shriek and got pulled back by her horns, with a groan she fell onto her back and exposed her belly. She hurried to put herself back on four legs as she wiggled away from her aggressor's grip.

With a roar, she unsheathed her claws and grabbed two spiky stars from her bags, throwing them in the direction of what seemed to be a SkyWing painted with mud and moss.

With her head pounding and her view blurring, the stars got lost in the trees, flying past the SkyWing's head. Eerie jumped into their face, clawing and hissing as she pulled herself onto their back, grabbed the wings, and quickly tore in the opposite direction with all of her strength.

A loud crack confirmed the breaking of the bones and membranes, and an agonizing scream came off of the SkyWing's blue mouth as it charged its fire breath and tried to find Eerie. But she was faster, smaller, and had a better vision in the pitch black.

After ripping half of the wing membranes off she used all of her weight to tear the membranes with her talons. She grabbed her dagger and was about to cut the victim's thigh artery when Dream Stealer yelled:

-NO! Leave them!-

Eerie hesitated for a moment too long, the SkyWing bucked and she fell on the ground, panting as she watched Dream Stealer come forward with his mouth lightened up by his fire breath.

They exchanged a number of snarls, intermittent flames, and smoke signals that must've corresponded to some kind of code. The SkyWing, to Eerie's surprise, briefly nodded and sat on his side, holding his broken wings and the cuts the LeafWing caused them.

Eerie though wasn't in a better condition, she was used to the striking pain her scales caused her; but every time she was left with no breath, as she held herself and drew deep breaths, trying to calm the pain down.

She walked out of her puddle of scarlet blood on weak legs and faced Dream Stealer:

-What did you do? Why didn't you finish him?-

He looked at her briefly: - Not everyone has to be killed. I talked to him in ignilinguis, it's a thing the SkyWings have, if you must know. You should return home, those wounds look very close to what I would define deadly.-

Eerie stared at him, then at the SkyWing, and said:

-What about him, what was he doing he..- a shiver shook her whole body as she stumbled closer to Dream Stealer and hung her head on his shoulder.

-You're on the verge of fainting, I'll leave Ninphes with you so that she can escort you home before us. Our turn isn't finished yet.-

Eerie would've protested, but her head felt heavy and the thought of her den after this long day seemed very welcoming, so she just gulped her pride down and nodded.

Ninphes silently took Eerie and placed her on her back, which was about twice the LeafWing's, and then walked away towards home with no sounds.

The nameless SkyWing looked at Eerie in the dark, scarlet red blood dripping from his wounds and an expression that screamed revenge on his face.



There was no sun when she woke up the morning after, just mist and a sad rain dripping from the trees down to the earth, making everything muddy and confused like a smudged painting.

A magpie call echoed in the pale clouds, it was the only sound breaking the ominous silence before a storm.

Eerie shook her head, a massive headache beginning to form at the base of her head. She tried to pull herself up from the moss bed, but the dew on her wings and the humidity were heavy on her scales and eyes, so she rattled and sank back into the warm leaves.

She looked around and realized that she must've been in the healer's den, a hut sunken high in a mangrove trunk next to the council's tree.

She could smell sage, herbs that nipped her nose, and an uncomfortable heat that irradiated in hot waves from her right.

The Seeker slowly rolled on the opposite side to search for the source of the annoying heat, being careful not to put weight on her weak side that had been bandaged with white cobwebs.

It was a SkyWing, not just a SkyWing, the SkyWing, the one she almost killed the night before.

He had his eyes closed, wine red eyelids draped on eyes that were moving fast. His breath was shaky and he was laying belly-down with the torn wings flared at his sides.

Eerie felt an overwhelming wave of disgust.

She observed the torn membranes, the blue veins, and cracked cartilage and thought about all the ways she could've put the enemy to sleep without causing him so much pain.

But honestly, Eerie didn't really feel guilt or shame, so she just ignored those stinging thoughts and instead thought about the reasons why she did it in the first place. He attacked her, he even took advantage of her distraction and made her fall!

She pondered that excuse for a while, and even after realizing that it wasn't an excuse for tearing someone's wings, she rolled her eyes and sunk back into the moss bed.

-Ultio will be ireful of your actions.-

Eerie heard the SkyWing's voice muttered by the moss he was resting his face in, and she just sighed in response.

-Oh, so you do feel shame for your actions.-

The wounded dragon's words hung in the air like the thick mist that was taking form in the heat of the hut.

-Your silence speaks more than your filthy tongue, LeafWing.-

-I'm a DewWing.- She heard the SkyWing become stiff at the sound of her words, he probably didn't expect her to actually reply.

-Hm-

-You don't even know what we are, do you, SkyWing?- she weakly hissed as she rotated her head to face the other dragon.

-I thought they were a legend, and so i assumed you were just a LeafWing, you know. Green scales, gold accents, frivolous horns, and a rotting mud smell. The only thing that didn't quite fit was the blue eyes.-

Eerie looked into his orange eyes with a dead serious expression: -You seem quite talkative for a dragon who tried to kill me a few hours ago.-

He tried to get up from his uncomfortable position with a grunt, but his legs were weak and the wings were screaming and burning, so he limited himself to facing the DewWing.

-I guess.-

They stared at each other for a long time, the moments falling like sand and only the scent of burning incense to conciliate their icy conversation.

-Can't you like, turn off the heat-

-What-

-The... The thing you make with your scales, it impedes the frost from forming on my wings and it's annoying.-

The SkyWing looked at Eerie as if she just started to snort frogs: -No, I'm doing it because the frost is disturbing.-

-Your heat is disturbing me, red dragon.-

-My name is Finch-

-Finch, your heat is bothering me- Eerie repeated.

The other dragon rolled his eyes and slightly shook his tail as he let his scales cool down.

-Sheesh thank you, you're pretty nice for a SkyWing.-

Finch just hid his muzzle in the moss and covered it with his talons in an attempt to keep his warmth.

A few moments later chilly raindrops started falling onto Eerie's back, making her scales as cool as fresh grass.

-Why do you need the frost?-

-Keeps the golden scales going, and repairs broken tissues faster, or at least that's what my mother says.-

Finch smiled:

-Hey, that's actually pretty cool! Why don't we have it?-

Eerie chuckled

-Oh shut it, you have fire and massive wings to fly really fast, that's like the best ability you can have-

Finch's looks turned to stone as he looked back at his slaughtered back and shivered in the cold, he looked utterly off place in the misty green, with his ruby-red scales shining like blood on the smooth floor.

-Oh- Eerie looked at her talons.

-You can say you're sorry, that'd make it a little better you know, DewWing-

Eerie stared at him with her disturbingly light sapphire eyes and whispered:

-I'm not sorry for what I did Finch, you attacked me first, I was protecting my borders.-

Finch angrily closed his talons in a fist and finally sat on his side, revealing his red belly bandaged in white tissues stained with scarlet.

-You're not friendly after all.-

-You thought small talk could make me feel sorry for what I did? That it would make me switch sides? it's not that easy, I'm a Seeker.-

-What does that even mean? You tore my wings! As if cutting my belly in half wasn't enough for you!- Finch yelled, smoke rising from his flaring nostrils that lit up with cyan.

-As I already said, you did it first, those were the consequences of your actions. And why did you attack us like that anyway?-

The SkyWing looked at his talons in shame.

-That's what I thought.-

Eerie now felt strong enough to try and look for the healers, the bandages were dry and pulling her scales uncomfortably.

As she got up and trotted around the hut, looking over the windows, Finch huffed desperately and begged:

-Can you at least give me those black rocks over there?-

Eerie looked at the pieces of obsidian he was hinting at and tossed them in his direction, careful not to get too close.

-I won't bite you, it's not like I can fight in these conditions anyway.-

-Better safe than sorry.-

Finch was chewing on the rocks as a healer finally showed up, a sage little NightWing with a missing forearm.

-Hey Eerie, nice to see you awake-

-Good Earlsun, Salvia. I was wondering if you could take a look at these bandages, they're starting to sting.-

The young dragon briefly nodded and hopped near Eerie that was now standing near the round window.

-They're looking good, I think you can take them off, for now. Let the dew do the rest. Did you have a Sun nap today?-

-Not with this mist, and the Moons are nowhere near the right timing for a Moon bath either.-

-Right, well, try to let the dew sit for as much as possible.-

-Hah, it'll be hard to do so with mister campfire here-

Salvia smiled and glared at Finch that had started heating up again because of the frost on his snout.-Whatever tore his wings like that must've been either a savage or a mad dragon, look at those tendons- She whispered to Eerie, who nodded slowly:

-I did that.-

Salvia's ears dropped as she reconstructed the events in her head: -Oh- I... I didn't-

Eerie shrugged and walked to the hut's door: -Thank you for the bandages, Sal.-

The healer followed her tail with her gaze as she jumped off the platform and soared in the lazy morning mist that was embracing the trees.

Salvia sighed deeply.

-That Seeker is a fanatic.-

She walked up to Finch to change his bandages without a sound.



6
FROST

Ezra was still angry at Eerie when she showed up at his hut, full of bruises and cuts on her snout.

They looked at each other in silence, like they always did after a fight, like Eerie did back at the healer's den with Finch. The truth was that she wasn't really a lucky dragon, and words never came out as she meant them to.

Ezra quickly nodded and they went to the Path of Rain to then walk down where the water was deeper and the water plants thrived. They sat there half draped in the water as the sun finally came out of hiding and shone on their cool backs.

Long moments passed, the silence dancing in-between them and telling all the words they didn't have the courage to.

A blueish black and white bird landed on a branch and sang its raspy birdsong.

Eerie opened her mouth a couple of times, visibly trying to put together a speech of excuses. She sighed briefly and gave up.

-I'm sorry-

Ezra was looking at the little fishes that were nibbling his talons in the water.

Eerie lowered her gaze and huffed:

-I said I'm sorry, Ezra.-

-That's the first time I hear you saying that.-

Eerie's eyes lightened at the sound of his words:

-I know. Should I say it more often?-

-No, it sounds like you're about to die when you say it.-

Eerie smiled and gazed at Ezra, his snout was still smothered with tears from the cries of the night before.

-I know I hurt you, but it was for the best.-

-You still won't admit that your actions are bad, Eerie.-

She frowned and said: -I don't know what you mean by that.-

Ezra finally looked into her eyes, locking his gaze to hers and saying: -Your actions, Iridessa, they're- You always think you're better than everyone.-

-That's not true!- she protested.

-Yes, it is, like when you threw the knife and tried to make Silencer get mad at you, when you yelled at me, every time you talk to Queen Foglia, you always try to make everyone look at you, you think you're always right.-

When I tore Finch's wings she thought, suddenly understanding the meaning of her friend's words.

-You always end up offending me, but even if I forgive you afterward, you're.. mean to me.-

Ezra almost whispered the last part of the sentence and broke eye contact, draping his tail on his talons in shame.

-You- you hurt me, Eerie.-

She almost didn't hear those last words, Ezra's expression was a mixture of shame and sadness.

Eerie blinked in surprise, suddenly a lot of confusion obfuscated her brain.

-I don't know why you say this- She mumbled. -I- I tried to get you to safety Ezra, you're too weak to participate in the scoutings.-

Eerie shuffled closer to him: -There's danger out there.-

Ezra's rage burst out all at once:

-That's what I want to see! I want to see what it's like! I can do it!-

-No, you can NOT. You don't know what it's like there, you don't know what I had to-

She interrupted herself halfway, reflecting on whether she had to tell Ezra the truth.

-You what?- He demanded.

-I had to do things that you wouldn't have been able to do, you don't have the cold blood it takes, nor the training.

Ezra frowned and splashed the water with his wings:

-I hate you, Eerie, you don't believe in me-

She sat there and let the silence say what she didn't want to.

Ezra shook his head and got up from the water, his smooth scales shining underneath the sun. Eerie thought about how different her scales looked, all torn and cracked from the fighting and training she had to do in order to be nominated a seeker, and said to herself that she did the right thing.

-I'm not forgiving you this time.-

Eerie didn't feel shame or regret as her only friend walked away in front of her.

'I'm right, I did what was best.' She thought as she laid in the water and let the sun shine on her scales and dissolve her worries.

It was Sundown when she woke up and finally decided to show up to the Seekers den. She saw Atheris conversing with Silencer and Ninpheas, the two Seekers towering over her mother's figure.

Their looks lightened up when they saw her, Atheris's face turned to a mask of worry:

-Oh my little sprout, are you hurt?-

Eerie shrugged:

-The usual hematoma- ouch- she flinched.

-And a talonful of broken ribs.- Silencer added, hinting at her chest with her tail.

Atheris nodded understandingly and hugged her daughter with her turquoise wings.

-We were just talking about how brave you've been last night, Eerie- Ninpheas smiled, baring an unsettling amount of sharp teeth.

Silencer didn't say anything and instead gazed at Atheris, slightly worried, who said: -Oh, um, yes so... They were thinking of adding you to the next patrol once your ribs are healed.-

-You mean like a real patrol? An official one?- Eerie whispered.

-Yes, after all, you're a Daughter of the Night, they're made to be awesome thieves, other than Seekers.- Silencer confirmed.

A shiver ran down Eerie's spine, After all I did do the right thing she thought to herself.

-It'd be an honor to be part of an official patrol, Silencer.-

The older dragon nodded slowly and looked at Atheris once again, a deep crease dividing her forehead.

-You'd need to train more with those leather bracelets, they could avoid some of those annoying wounds. And also you should try and be less.... shiny if that's possible?-

Eerie looked at Nymphes, the muscular Nightwing that said those words, and gestured towards herself with a wing:

-I don't know how that would be possible without having to literally tear my scales out.-

The other dragon shrugged carelessly and looked at her golden scales in a way that made shivers run down Eerie's spine.

Atheris composed herself and brought a talon to her silver necklace like she always did when she was nervous:

-I can't wait for strong dragons like you to teach my daughter the way of the... Night.-

She said as she covered Eerie's back with her leaf-shaped wings and dragged her towards their den.

Silencer gave them a quick goodbye, while Nymphes walked away without further formalities.

As mother and daughter were walking under the canopy of thick trees that surrounded the colony's dens, the Sun disappeared behind the horizon, leaving the dragons in a quiet twilight.

-Eerie, I..-

The young dragon looked up to Atheris, a questioning look on her face:

-Yes, mother?-

-Are you sure you really want to become a Daughter of the Night? You- you know how they're treated.-

Eerie really thought about it for some minutes, to then say:

-I don't really care how the others will treat me. I like the dragons of the inflorescence of course, but I don't think them looking down on me will change my friendships. I have none anyways.-

Atheris gazed at the twilight around them and then back at her daughter:

-Pheria doesn't love Ultio's creatures, child-

-Pheria doesn't love me, apparently.- Eerie replied, pointing at her scales and the aurora patterns under her wings.

-Ultio, on the other hand... she lets me gain energy from her every two full moons, mother.-

Of course, Atheris knew that, but what she didn't understand was why her daughter preferred to turn to the ugly and winding path of the Night, where she could've still chosen the one of Light and Day.

-I don't know, Eerie, I Just don't want you to become like them.-

-Like who, Silencer? She's cool.- The Seeker replied, kicking a pebble a couple of steps in front of her.

-I don't mean Silencer, I actually think she's the only sane one in that... congregation.-

Eerie huffed:

-Why do you refer to them with such a disgusted tone? They're the ones providing the majority of food and protection for the tribe.-

Atheris dipped her head and let out a groan:

-It's useless talking with you, I don't know why you don't want to listen to your mother anymore.-

Eerie looked at her mother with a baffled expression as she walked away and disappeared inside their den.

A big blue and white bird looked at Eerie in the eyes as it jumped on the ground, quietly searching for food.

-You don't think the Seekers are scary, do you?- she asked.

The bird gave no response and flew away.
She didn't know why apparently everyone thought the Seekers were so bad.

Four days passed and no notices were heard from the Seekers nor Ezra, Eerie's scales still felt tight and they pulled her skin awkwardly when she turned too fast, so she thought that a visit to Finch would've helped her warm up her muscles and make her feel better.
She knew that she didn't feel sorry for what she did to Finch. She never felt sorry for her actions, actually. In the scrolls and books she had read before, at one point the protagonists always felt a grieving weight on their chests and felt like they were unable to breathe, like the world was trembling and falling apart and other dramatic scenarios, but she never really related to them.

She only felt like talking to Finch could teach her something. She was curious about his ways of living and the alliances his tribe formed with the BeetleWings.

She fled up to the healer's den and stood behind the entrance, peeking in only slightly. Finch was finally sitting up from his moss bed, his long scarlet tail draped on his legs as he tried to open and close his wings slightly, flinching every time a tendon or muscle strained. Smoke was swirling up from his nostrils as frustration filled him and he laid back down in pain, closing his eyes.

He felt swift steps and a chilling presence in front of him. A cold breath on his eyelids as he opened them tiredly and let out a yelp: a pair of blue eyes were staring at him, slit pupils that followed every movement.

-Hey! You scared me- he said.

-I thought you were a mighty fighter, SkyWing. How come you get scared so easily?-

Finch huffed and sat back up to face Eerie, who was now sitting in front of him, her neck curved into a slight hump to face him.

-Maybe because the only dreams I've had lately are of you tearing my wings apart.-

He expected Eerie's eyes to lower in shame, her tail to cower and all that jazz, but she just stood there and blinked stoically.

-Yeah well, get over those because I've got some questions for you.-

-Oh of course your majesty, how about I also kiss your knuckles and bow before you to then proceed with this delightful interrogation I am totally yearning to do?-

Eerie hid a smile and nodded:

-I mean, I wouldn't stop you, plebeian.-

Finch hissed and turned his back to her as he went to the shelves to search for some seeds to ease his pains.

-Go away little assassin, I have very little energy right now and I won't be spending it to answer your very-assassin-like questions.-

Eerie tilted her head and smiled:

-But you don't have many dragons to chat with, do you? It looks like I'm the only one willing to talk with a big ol' grumpy SkyWing in this inflorescence!-

Finch snorted in frustration as he sat back down, dizzy: -For Lanèia's sake, could you just shut your mouth for a second and give me some damn opium seeds? My head is spinning from all of this sarcasm.-

Eerie got up and rummaged behind the shelves for a while, to then return with a glass container full of little black seeds:

-If I give them to you, will you answer me?-

Finch hissed and dipped his head while laying down once more, the piercing pain in his back impeded him to say or think any more.

-Here.- Eerie said as she took the cortex of a cinnamon plant and wrapped the seeds in the soft packet.

-Eat-

Finch took the mouthful without hesitating and rested his head on his talons, waiting for the pain to ease.

-You know I could've just poisoned you right now, do you?- Eerie whispered.

The Skywing's eyes flew open and thought:

'How could I be so stupid?! I let her give me food!

'-What did you do?!- He was trying to think of a way to get out of that situation. His head felt heavy and was pounding because of the disorienting pain in his back.

-What if that was oleander cortex, hmm?- She chuckled, her snout getting closer to his.

-Why would you do that?- Finch said, as he tried to get up and dragged his wings behind him, a quick panicked breathing made him spit smoke in all directions.

His sight was blurry and smothered, saliva dripping from his fangs as he looked around the place.

He tried to gag multiple times to get the poison out of him before being stopped by Eerie:-Oh chill out I didn't do anything, I was just screwing around with you.- she said annoyingly.

The red dragon looked at her in disbelief and swore with the whole vocabulary of curse words he knew, to then drop himself on the moss bed with his whole weight.

Moments passed before Eerie said:- Your life is in my talons Finch, be careful with what you do, you're surprisingly easy to trick.-

He rolled on one side and rested for a couple of minutes before closing his eyes and saying:

-I'm in too much pain to say something else other than insults, I swear you'll kill me one day you rat.-

Eerie started chewing on some berries as she laid on the hardwood floor and said:

-Yeah it's never too late you know, that's why it's convenient for you to answer my questions before I kill you out of spite.-

Finch just nodded and let out a long sigh, the overwhelming feeling of being a prisoner came to him all at once, and he realized once more how dangerous that scrawny creature was.

Eerie chewed on another berry and said:

-So how does this ignislinguis thing work?-

Finch thought for a couple of minutes and then started inhaling more and more air, filling his lungs with air as his nostrils lit up with cyan and the scales at the back of his neck slightly moved and let out puffs of smoke. He then moved his head up and down two times and let out a big puff of white smoke that vanished in the air with elegant swirls.

-It's a language made of body gestures and fire signals, they teach it to young SkyWings and to every dragon that can wield fire, if they're educated enough.-

-Oh, and what did you just say?-

-That you're the most annoying dragon I've ever met.-

Eerie laughed and then went silent for a moment, her look slightly changed, almost letting out the excitement contained behind her mask of boredom.

-Oh and how does it work if.. let's say if like a dragon only has smoke?-

Finch raised an eyebrow and said with an interrogative look: -I've never met a dragon like that, pretty sure they don't even exist.-

Eerie turned her icicle gaze on him and let out a swirl of glittery smoke.

-It must be your lucky day.-

Finch suddenly shut his mouth and gulped - Oh I'm sorry I-

-Don't they teach you anything in SkyWing school?-

Finch shrugged and said: - I'm a simple soldier. I only got the basic try-not-to-get-killed training and some instructions on how to patrol borders.-
Eerie scoffed: - Looks like that training failed.-
Finch's eyes glimmered blue and his nostrils dilated, ready to reduce Eerie to a pile of ash.
-Finch, you know you can't do that, just teach me already-
He took a big breath and replied:-I don't know if the language is applicable to smoke-only dragons though-
Eerie rolled her eyes: -Well then just teach me the smoke signals!-
The SkyWing sat up with an annoyed expression and flared his broken wings -Very well then, I'll teach you. If you promise me you'll apologize for these one day.-
Eerie rolled her eyes:-It's not like you have much choice, Finch. You either teach me or you stay here and rot.-
The SkyWing closed his wings: - Yeah but still, I want an apology once all of this is over.-
The LeafWing just briefly nodded, excitement glimmering behind her eyes.
Finch looked at her and said:
-You know Eerie, I find you interesting, you're such a strange dragon.-



7
STRINGS

The birds were chirping happily as Eerie flew above the puddles and rivers of the Dewwings pillars.

The frost these days seemed to be rarer and rarer with every passing day, spring was approaching the inflorescence, and Eerie's body was now fully restored and healed after six long months, even her usually cracked scales and dim eyes were shining with a new light. In that time period she noticed Finch's wings were almost completely repaired. Salvia did an awesome job with those cobwebs and strings; she attached the tendons back together, and the torn membranes had been patched with strong red-colored chitin, only some marks and cuts were left on the borders of the wings, but Finch seemed to grow healthier every day and Eerie knew he was about to leave soon.

She didn't like the way that train of thoughts made her stomach sink and her heart ache. She walked past a vine curtain and moved it aside with her wings, stepping into a big cave that shone with the reflection of the stream that passed inside of it.

-Hi Ladybug-

-Oh if it isn't my favorite Ray of Moonshine!- Finch said while getting up from his burnt stone slab and stepping out in the sunshine.

He looked marvelous In the spring light, all carmine and translucent wings, his blue veins shining in the sun.

Eerie chuckled and ducked her head when the SkyWing came to hug her with his massive wings.

-Oh keep that for your 'girlfriend' over there in the Sky Kingdom you red insect- she laughed.

-Why don't you like my new shiny wings? I look like a damn mosaic! Bet Astria will love them- Finch flexed his wings up and down.

-I'm not judging, I'm really not, but you gotta be blind or have brain damage to be engaged with such a goofball- the LeafWing said while hopping down the banks of the river and gliding over the crystalline waters.

-Oh stop it, even the birds are happy I'm back, Eerie!- he yelled from the other side of the river. The birds were actually singing louder than she had ever heard before.

-I sure am.- she whispered, not loud enough to be heard by the SkyWing.

-ARE YOU READY?- she screamed instead.

-ALWAYS, MOONSHINE!- he walked back a couple of steps and agitated his big wings up and down a couple of times.

Then he finally flew for the first time in seven months.

He flew like it was the first time, the spring breeze played with his newfound wings and dragged his tail, the light shone on his cool back as he closed his wine-colored eyelids and glided with the birds and the wind.

He flapped his wings, the chitin perfectly balancing the missing pieces of membrane as he casted a bright red reflection on the green and blue forest around him.

He flew like the bird he took his name from, then opened his sunset orange eyes and landed right next to Eerie.

-I could do this all day.- he sighed while closing his eyes again.

The DewWing left him a moment to taste his brand new freedom, to then lightly touch his open wings with hers, black against red in the light of the morning.

-You know what comes now, it's the last time we can practice- she said.

Finch slowly shook himself from the torpor of the sun and smiled at her with all of his teeth. -It's also the last time I'll be here with my best assassin friend.-

-Don't say that, you know It's hard for me seeing you go-

-Oh please don't play with me right now, I'm too happy for one of your soul-crushing jokes- he giggled.

-I'm not joking Finch, it's sad seeing you go, you've been the only dragon I could talk to for almost two seasons.- She said, looking over the river and down to the little waterfalls.

He turned to face her and said: -I'm not going anywhere too far, Eerie, I'll be just a couple of days away from here.-

-You shouldn't visit the inflorescence often, and you know that, we'll have to make you go away forever.-

-But what about Stickbug! They love me-

Eerie laughed: -You're literally the only dragon they'd ever talked to.-

She pondered her words and said -I don't think I want you to leave.-

Finch opened his wings and finally hugged her, he tightened his grip and said: -I'll always remember you, Eerie.-

She let out a small sigh and maybe a tiny teardrop fell from her eyes. Finch was looking away and no one was around, so it was good, she could cry now.

-It's kinda sad that your best friend was the first dragon that tried to kill you, don't you think?-

Eerie sighed and sobbed unstoppably, shaking from her head to the tip of her wings

-M.. maybe- she said.

Finch let out one of his loud waves of laughter and rocked her back and forth. He gripped her talons and took off the ground, flying over the mangroves and up in the middle of the sky. Eerie wiped her tears and let go of him, composing herself and slowly flapping her wings to stay afloat.

-So are you ready for your last session of ignislinguis?- He asked her

-I'm always ready, Ladybug.-

She dove back in the middle of the river and splashed in the water.

-So how do we say water with smoke signals?- Finch asked, a kind note in his voice.

Eerie closed her talons, letting out only three fingers, and tapped three times on the side of her snout as she let out swirls of smoke from her nostrils.

-That's good! now try to respond to these questions-

They continued their lesson until Midsun, it was now the perfect time for Finch to finally leave the place that had been both his prison and his home for half a year.

-Have you said goodbye to all the dragons back in town?- Eerie asked.

Finch nodded: -Yeah, Atheris cried a river and even gave me a little talisman, look!-

He pointed at a green crystal wired in wax and strings tied around his neck.

-Oh that's good, not even my own mother gifts me stuff.- Eerie commented.

Finch laughed and then showed her his back leg.

-Salvia even gave me extra cobwebs and chitin bags in case something breaks-

-She's a good dragon, isn't she?-

-Yeah, reminds me of my older sister actually, which I'll see in less than three days now...- he looked at the sky above them and said: -...It was nice while it lasted, Eerie.- he said while taking her talon and giving her a small yellow and orange stone the color of his eyes. -I

asked Ezra if there was anything you liked more than sarcasm and he said to give you one of these. I think you should get back to him, actually.-

Eerie took the stone without speaking a word. Instead, she went behind a tree trunk and whipped out a tiny bag of black seeds to give to her friend.

He looked at her with a confused expression but she just said -You'll understand.-

-Oh, alright then... I guess it's a farewell, Moonshine.- Finch said while taking a few steps back.

-Farewell Ladybug!- she yelled as he soared up in the Midsun sky and glided over her head, spiraling into wide circles as he spat out blue flames in the distance.

Eerie took off and watched him disappear at the horizon, towards his home, his family, and everything he always fought for before being injured by her.

She still didn't feel regret for what she had done, only sadness. Her only friend was now gone for good.

-I hope you can have a good life Finch, you deserve it.-

She, on the other talon, still had a lot of apologizing to do.



It had been three days since Finch took off the DewWing colony.

He didn't exactly know where the SkyWing Kingdom was, but he knew it was far west, over a small ocean that separated the SkyWing Kingdom from the Beetle caves and the DewWing pillars.

It was now Moonrise, a big blue moon watched the sky severely and lit up the jagged edges of the snow-capped mountains.

His wings felt heavy after all those days of flying, and even if he was a SkyWing and was meant to fly for long distances, he was out of shape. But luckily enough he was hovering over his old home, he was finally able to smell the fresh pines and clean wind of the mountains, instead of the heavy and oppressing air of the swamps of the DewWings.

He flew over the crevasses inhabited by his friends and tribe, to then land on the cliff over his and his sister's cave.

A loud hiss made him turn around, a big blue and orange BeetleWing was staring at him with his two pairs of eyes, slithering his forked tongue around his fangs while he scratched the ground with his sharp talons.

His ocean blue horns stood tall and smooth on top of his head, along with two antennas that quickly unraveled to investigate the SkyWing.

Finch froze in place, a deafening silence in-between the two dragons.

The BeetleWing scanned his whole body and held his gaze to the SkyWing's chest.

The red dragon reached to grab the crystal necklace gifted to him by Atheris and covered it with his talons.

-Who gave you this?- The BeetleWing hissed, his mandibles nipping the air.

-Why are you asking?- Finch replied, stepping back a few steps.

-It's BeetleWing business, and you as a SkyWing are required to answer the questions BeetleWing soldiers ask you.-

Finch immediately understood the danger he was in, and realized he was already dead.

-Oh but can't I know your name first? You didn't even introduce yourself, insect.-

The BeetleWing snapped closer to Finch's neck and opened his wings while pushing the SkyWing off the cliff.

Finch opened his chitin wings and glided off the rock, to then hover up in the air and jump on the back of the BeetleWing.

-I just asked your name, ally! I don't know if the Skywing Queen will be indulgent with you if she finds out you've killed one of her soldiers, too.-

The other dragon stopped himself to think about Finch's words and asked: -You're a soldier too? Where's your armor then?-

-I just finished my shift.-

The BeetleWing snapped his mandibles shut and said -Then why are you out here? Shouldn't you be sleeping? Why do you have a jade crystal, and most importantly, why are your wings covered in chitin? Skywings don't ever use such primitive methods to heal."

Finch was now breathing heavily, thinking fast of an answer that conciliated all of the BeetleWing's questions.

-I paid a visit to my cousin over the ocean, and I returned yesterday.-

The BeetleWing seemed content with this kind of answer, so he nodded and said: -Oh I see I see... and who gave you permission for a visit over-ocean while there are conflicts at the border?-

The SkyWing was running out of ideas, his mind was foggy and he was tired from the long trip, so he just went for the safest option and attacked the BeetleWing.

He jumped high with the help of his wings and body-slammed the enemy, crushing him under his weight. The blue dragon groaned and pinched his neck with his mandibles, stabbing him with the stingers he had on his wrists.

Finch screamed and rolled on his side, convulsively holding the side of his neck.

The BeetleWing got back on his legs and went to confront the SkyWing face-to-face.

-Oh I see our soldier ran out of imagination, didn't he?-

Finch was looking around panicking, the blue dragon getting closer with every breath, all of his four eyes following his every movement.

-I...I can tell you.- He whispered.

The other dragon stopped and a horrible smile appeared on his snout.

-Will you answer my questions sincerely?- he asked.

Finch nodded.

-Good, but we'll need the Queen for this, Ultio forbid I do this without a witness.-

His mandibles opened and closed a couple of times, giving Finch a wave of disgust.

They walked through a deep crevasse Finch had never been to, to then be conducted to a huge cave near a carbon deposit. As he walked in, he noticed the floor was tiled with smooth obsidian rocks and was decorated with swirls painted with black paint.

Occasional insects lit up with purple and blue as they walked by.

-Those are called Flames- The BeetleWing soldier said catching Finch staring at them Finch's face lit up as he glanced behind him to say - And what's your name?-

The BeetleWing shut down the conversation and poked Finch to walk faster.

As they went deeper into the caves, the butterflies and insects became more, the buzzing louder.

Finch walked for a couple of minutes ahead of the other soldier, to then stop himself before a huge black shrine filled with white flames that burnt incense and sage leaves.

-What's this place?- he asked.

No one responded.

They stood there for long moments until a bright cyan head appeared from a gallery at his right.

The figure had a sleek turquoise snout wrapped in royal blue silk, her neck was arched and strong, a million scales of all the shades of the sky rippled under the light of the white fire and the stones glimmering in the roof of the cave.

She had long, lapis lazuli-colored wings that draped elegantly along with her sapphire tail, curled and careful not to touch the ground.

She had two black spikes on the sides of her cheeks and smooth horns that curled behind her head downwards.

Her eyes were a deep red, almost black.

Finch immediately bowed to touch the ground with his head and horns, his wings flared at the sides and his talons curled up against the ground.

-Queen Columba.-

The young dragon moved her onyx stare on the two soldiers sitting in front of her and said:

-What brings you here, BeetleWing?-

She had a warm voice that reminded Finch of the sound of the morning doves.

-I found him flying over our territory, he hasn't identified himself and lied about his permanence in the other continent, Your Majesty.-

Columba moved her fiery look on the other SkyWing, who suddenly felt small and guilty.

-And why can't he speak for himself?-

The Beetlewing stuttered: -Oh... I...-

The Queen eyed him and said:- So what's the reason you're really here...-

-It's Finch, Your Majesty.- Finch quickly interrupted the queen

He took a risky step forward, and the Queen trailed off.

She walked back a few steps.

-Please stay away from your Queen.- She whispered.

Finch nodded and said: - You see, Your Majesty, I'm here because I've just returned from the patrol border in Pantala, I've been badly injured and I've been forced to stay there for many months in order to heal properly and fly back here.-

The Queen listened carefully and said: - Then why didn't I receive notices from my commanders?-

She looked at the BeetleWing soldier eloquently: - Princess Carrion assured me I'd lose little to no soldiers in this alliance, and all that has happened so far has been me receiving notices of funerary pires.-

The BeetleWing attempted to talk again, but was shushed harshly by Columba.

Finch gulped and said: - I uh, had really severe injuries to my wings.-

He then opened his massive chitin wings who shone with an eerie light under the white flames in the cave.

The Queen's snout wrinkled: - And who cured those wings? I know two tribes who can do such meticulous healing. Do you know who they are, Finch?-

She was holding two menacing claws up in the air between them.

Finch shook his head violently and quickly closed his wings.

The Queen's gaze turned on the other dragon.

The BeetleWing was frantically looking around the room, trying to find an exit.

-BeetleWings, of course, and DewWings.-

Finch's eyes widened and he almost choked on his own spit.

-I..I'm extremely sorry your majesty, but may I ask who are these...DewWings you're talking about?-

The other soldier stuttered.

Columba gracefully sat on the ground, carefully avoiding the rich tapestries on the tiled floor.

-Why doesn't our soldier explain it to us, hm?- she said, hinting at Finch.

Finch was thinking fast, his eyes darting from side to side.

-They... they are a tribe of...-

-A CULT of dragons, if you may.- She imposed.

Finch nodded swiftly and continued:- A... a cult of hybrid creatures who live near the north-west coast of Pantala, in the First Wing. Really close to BeetleWing territory.-

-Wasn't that the reason you went to patrol there in the first place, soldier?-

Queen Columba was known to be a smart and cunning queen, and Finch knew he was already dead for her.

-I... I admit I've been helped along the way... to be put back on my own talons again.-

The BeetleWing soldier seemed to not understand a word, he looked at the SkyWing Queen demandly.

Her eyes narrowed, the white barely visible amongst that sea of deep red.

-Was it the DewWings?-

Finch looked at his talons. He didn't want to betray Eerie or any of the others, after all.

-Do I need to repeat myself, soldier?-

Finch was slowly backing away as the Queen ordered the BeetleWing soldier to take him.

He ran as fast as his tired muscles allowed him to, his body a red flash slithering in the jagged hallways.

He stopped himself in front of a crossroad, his heart pounding between his ribs.

He carefully sniffed the air and picked up the faint scent of pines and humidity, and began running again.

All of the crossroads and dirt paths were becoming confused in his head, all of the trails merging and separating again in a hellish maze.

His wings began brushing against the tunnels, his tail was continuously touching the ground and getting poked with spiky rocks.

He was finding himself out of breath, but the steps of the BeetleWing soldier stopped two crossroads ago.

Finch sat next to a stalactite, smoke swirling up his nose and the fire in his scales warming up the rock behind him, making tiny droplets evaporate all around him.

He began looking around carefully, trying to find a way out, observing the stone ceiling and the quartz crystals in the walls, when suddenly a steel net was thrown over him.

He began screaming and wiggling furiously, trying to burn the net's wires with his scales.

The steel wires wiggled weakly and cracked, but held their place nonetheless.

He felt a stinging puncture behind his neck and a crippling heat on his body.

The only things he remembered afterwards were claws on his chest and his wings newly fractured, chitin all over the floor in sharp red shards.

The Queen found the beetle soldier not long after Finch had fallen asleep, another greyish cyan SkyWing after her. She gracefully draped her tail on her talons and said: -Go fetch and bring her here, the situation is more complicated than what I had anticipated.-

The BeetleWing soldier looked warily at the SkyWing queen and carefully nodded in fear.

8
SCALES

A marmalade colored SkyWing was strolling silently in the thick green wetlands that invaded the North-West wing peninsula of the continent, softly panting in the oppressing damp air. Her pitch black stripes stood out on her brightly colored back, shining with raven-blue reflections under the dappled light.

Dazzling light grey eyes pierced the path unraveling before her, carefully searching for traces of other dragons.

It had been days, and her body should've felt heavy from all of the walking and flying she had to endure to go wander so deep into the wild territory, but the years she spent roaming the dry savannah with her brothers had trained her better than any high-rank SkyWing soldier ever could.

She was equipped with a leather satchel and loads of patience. She could've waited for days for someone to come and find her, but she just wasn't the type of dragon to wait like a damsel in distress.

The ginger dragon suddenly stopped in the midst of the stream she was crossing, carefully listening to any sounds, feeling the water cheerfully splash around her wrists.

On the bank of the river wet talon prints formed a trail deeper into the swamp.

She tried to sniff the air, but the only scents she could pick up were those of the red cardinal flowers sitting in the water, caressing her arms.

She quickly swam to the other side of the river and pulled herself up on the bank, her crest dripping wet. She started slowly stalking the prints on the grass, dragging her long tail on the ground.

A pine colored dragon was trotting before the SkyWing, her night black wings slightly open to reveal aurora patterns on the underside. She was wearing a glass bracelet around her wrist, and weird bruises dotted her tail.

The orange dragon crutched on the ground, trying to unsuccessfully blend in with her surroundings like she usually did in the savannah.

She sat as still as the tall pillar-like mountains that circled the coast. The wind blew strong between the steep pillars, revealing her scent to the green dragon.

Not right now! she thought while rolling on her side and hiding in the ferns.

She wasn't used to the weird phenomenons that happened in that area of the continent.

The other dragon stopped and turned around, tasting the air with her split tongue. Her ribs stuck out horribly on her pointy chest, rising up and down rhythmically.

-Is there anyone here? The BeetleWings let us have the territory, there's no reason to be here.- She imposed.

The striped dragon thought that there was no use for hiding, so after some long moments of pondering, she slipped out of the big leaves and revealed herself to the other.

The wiry dragon's icy look turned upon her, investigating every single scale.

-What are you doing here, SkyWing?- She inquired.

-I have a name.- the other replied.

The green dragon looked at her condescendingly and raised her eyebrows.

-It's Cozbi.- The SkyWing dipped her head.

-Eerie.- the leafy dragon said while adding: -Strange name for a SkyWing, why is that?-

Cozbi smiled: - Was I the one lucky enough to choose my own name?-

Eerie shrugged and closed her wings.

-Do you know where you are?-

-In Pantala.-

Eerie shook her head: -You're in DewWing territory.-

Cozbi blinked and her look brightened up: - Really? Wasn't it a legend?-

Eerie proudly opened her aurora marked wings and puffed out her chest.

-Do I look legendary? - She joked.

Cozbi let out a laugh and said: -I thought DewWings would look less... frilly? - She hinted at Eerie's multiple sets of them.

She fluffed them up and brushed them with her wings: - It depends on the family, most of the time.- She said while getting up and investigating the other dragon.

-So Cozbi, why did you leave the Distant Kingdoms to come all the way here?-

Cozbi shook her head: - I don't come from there, but from the Chari territories.-

Eerie tilted her head: - Savannah then, no wonder you look like that.-

Cozbi made a weird expression: -Like what? We've been living there for longer than the Distant Kingdom SkyWings themselves... they call us GoldWings.-

She slowly unfurled her wings, which shone brightly under the sun, revealing intricate golden stripes that ran down her tail and neck, wrapping around her ibex-like horns.

-Damn, that's impressive, you're quite glittering for a SkyWing, you know- Eerie commented, shielding her eyes with her talons.

Cozbi closed her wings and shook her damp crest: -Says the one with gold plastered on her snout- she grinned.

Eerie let out a giggle between her teeth and turned serious all of a sudden.

-I still want to know why you're here, I've had past experiences with SkyWings, you know.- she said, looking in the river behind them.

-The truth is that I am lost, I was hunting in the core of the driest savannah when a torrential storm descended on us, my mother went missing and only one of my brothers were left.-

Eerie clutched her wrists and wondered if that may have affected Finch's return home.

Cozbi looked at her, trying to figure out her thoughts, and let out a groan: -Ouch, these bruises must hurt, at least we're buddies!- She showed Eerie her cheekbone, it had a deep hook-shaped cut. It was strangely similar to Eerie's scars left by Silencer.

The DewWing's look turned to worry as she hesitantly let her talons run along the wound, and Cozbi flinched.

-Ah, sorry. I better bring you to my friend Salvia, she will know how to help..-

Cozbi trailed off and shook her head: -I'm afraid they won't be happy to have a SkyWing among them, after all of the intricacies my tribe inflicted upon yours.-

Eerie grinned: -But you're a GoldWing, aren't you?-

Cozbi smiled with her whole face and fluffed up her crest.

-Plus, it's just Salvia, she's as silent as the wind and won't say a word about you. I'll bring her here.-

The GoldWing nodded and sat patiently on the ground, watching Eerie disappear in the bushes.

Shortly after her new friend appeared again on the path, with a pale lime dragon right behind her. She was older than the two of them, and had her right arm missing. She gracefully greeted Cozbi and looked right in her eyes with her icy white ones, circled by pointy ivory lashes.

'she looks trustful, at least.' Cozbi thought.

-Where does it hurt?- She asked practically.

Cozbi tilted her face downwards for the small Dewwing to reach and pressed her teeth together as the other dragon grabbed a tiny white beetle, carefully opened its mandibles and positioned it on top of Cozbi's skin, while holding the two sides of the wound together with her talons.

-Still.- she ordered.

She hopped to the bank of the river and, balancing her weight on her wings and back legs, she reached out into the water with her pale arm and washed it swiftly, to then grab some seeds from the red cardinals on the bank.

-Eat, it's going to hurt a little.-

Cozbi made a no gesture, so Salvia shrugged and went to cut the beetle's head.

The insect's mandibles pierced Cozbi's skin shut as she winced.

-Done!- Salvia announced, looking at Eerie to see if her work was approved by her friend.

-You're amazing Salvia!- Eerie smiled, looking at the now closed wound.

-Did it hurt?- She asked the Goldwing.

Cozbi smiled: -Not at all, your friend is one useful dragon.-

-Glad to be of service, now if you excuse me, Eerie called me in the midst of a hatching saying it was very urgent, and I must go back to check if that dragonet is still alive.- She looked eloquently at Eerie, who hid a grin.

As salvia was leaving, Eerie grabbed her wing and while looking at her in the eyes positioned her index talon on her snout, whispering "shh" while hinting at Cozbi.

Salvia nodded slowly and left.

As soon as she was out of sight, Eerie and Cozbi burst out laughing.

-You had TEARS in your eyes Cozbi, you can't tell me that didn't hurt like a bite on the tail!-

Cozbi sighed: -Oh nah that hurt like TEN TIMES a bite on the tail! And why did she have to use a beetle? I hate those!-

They joked and chatted together until past sundown, when the frost started forming on Eerie's scales, making her glass scales shimmer in the dying light.

-Are you sure you want to stay out here all alone?-

Cozbi dipped her head: -I must continue to search for my mother and brothers, but I can come back here tomorrow!-

Eerie's eyes lit up: -At today's hour?-

Cozbi nodded and they went on their own paths, Cozbi followed the river until she found a small dry cave inside one of the pillar mountains.

It was covered in moss that miraculously stayed dry from the humidity of the wetland, so she stayed there for the night.

Eerie walked back to her den, where her mother Atheris was sleeping in her usual spot, with her chin on her talons.

She's asleep, still got some time. she thought while replacing the vines to cover the den and quietly trotting away.

She was splashing on the path of rain, looking at the four moons above and thinking about how she didn't get a moon nap in months.

As she approached the healer's mangrove she quietly flew up into one of the lower storage rooms and began looking for a pale colored dragon.

Salvia was just walking past the entrance, in the stairs that led to the higher levels.

Eerie opened the door and hopped up the stairs, silent as a whisper.

As she was about to tap Salvia on the shoulder, she noticed a lime colored tail peeking behind some patients.

'Not him!', she thought as Salvia turned around and said: -Oh for Pheria! Didn't see you there Eerie, what are you doing here? You have a diurnal wake pattern!-

Eerie looked around warily and closed her mouth shut, nodding quietly.

Salvia looked at her up and down, not understanding the DewWing's strange behavior, and then gazed around the room.

-Oh, is it because if Ezr...-

-AH!! NUH UH- Eerie shouted, covering Salvia's mouth and dragging her in the staircase, shutting the door with her tail.

Salvia mumbled something but fell silent quickly, rolling her eyes.

Ezra lifted his head while putting down a handful of cotton he was using on a wounded dragonet: -Hm? Salvia?-

He looked around the empty room, dimly lit up by some orange firefly lamps.

When no one responded, he went to check on the door, and found Salvia stoically looking at him through the stained glass.

Ezra sighed and rolled his eyes, opening the door and grabbing Salvia's wing to take her from the other DewWing's grip.

Eerie let go of Salvia and closed her eyes dramatically while shielding her snout with her wings, expecting Ezra to say something to her.

He closed the door and continued to bandage his patient.

'So, he got a role too, in the end.' Eerie thought ruefully.

From behind the glass she could notice that the curve of his neck got higher and his shoulders broader, as well as his horns now grown to their full length.

His scales were thicker now, and they had a new emerald tint to them, that mixed nicely with his ebony colored stripes.

She felt a wave of desperation as she realized how much time she had missed.

Now instead of the skinny yellowish dragonet she used to fight with, she found herself looking at a completely new dragon, he seemed almost a stranger to her.

But what could she do about it? He hated her, right?

She looked at her talons, she had also changed in the meantime, or at least she thought so.

She looked at her reflection in the stained glass: Her eyes were narrower than before, her eyelids heavier on her ice blue eyes, her eyebrows thicker. Her horns got longer and instead of forming a weird wiggling curve, they now gracefully curved into long swirls, just like her mother's.

The Seeker looked at the golden scales that now grew thicker on her coat, forming intricate patterns that reflected the lanterns' light onto the staircase's dark wood in a show of glittering lights.

Oh, who am I anymore? She thought as she opened the door with her wing and stepped into the room, walking up to Salvia.

-Sorry for that, uh, I just wanted to give you these, I don't really need them anymore. I uh, washed them in the river.-

Eerie took some white bandages from the satchel secured to her thigh and gave them to the healer.

-Thank you, Eerie. Are you sure that is all?- She looked towards Ezra, who was grinding some opium seeds into a paste with a pestle.

Eerie just stood there for long moments, fiddling with her claws on the wood and a shaky breath, oh how she wished Finch was there to help.

Her view got blurry with heavy tears as she dropped her head in her wings.

Salvia turned pale and reached up to Eerie's face with her ivory claws, wiping away the tears.

-It's okay, you don't have to say anything- She whispered, walking Eerie towards the door.

The DewWing shook her head vigorously and walked towards Ezra, clearing her throat.

He didn't move his head and instead focused on grinding the herbs.

-That's... uh, chamomile, right? You Shouldn't press too hard or you might waste the lymph-

She walked around the little wooden table and sat down, pointing at the mortar bowl.

The only sound in the room was of the pestle hitting the rock.

Salvia walked down the stairs, closing the door.

-Oh, maybe it's Calendula, I could be wrong, you were always smarter than me with herbs.-

Eerie tried again.

Ezra placed the bowl on the table and got up, reaching for the dried plants hanging besides the lamps.

Eerie sighed:-You know, we can talk again, you don't have to continue with this farce-

Ezra tore off a chunk of dried pepper from the bunch, making all the other herbs fall on the pavement; Eerie got up quickly and raked them up, crushing the fragile leaves with her talons. The younger dragon rolled his eyes, slapping Eerie on the wrist and taking the crushed pile in his cupped claws. Eerie crouched down to help, badly knocking her horns into Ezra's with a huff.

Ezra let out a growl and side-eyed the black and green dragon, tearing the herbs away from her, causing a huge puff of smoke all around them and making Eerie have a fit of sneezes.

Salvia was watching everything from behind the stained glass door, sighing at the comically pitiful scene that was playing in front of her.

Eerie snorted and said :- What's wrong with you? Why won't you talk to me? We've had this fight already and it always ends the same!-

Ezra was painfully quiet, now sitting at the table again and busy packing a compress.

Eerie grunted and walked up to him, tapping him on the head with a claw. - You may be taller now but I'm still older than you, little monkey.-

Ezra's eyes narrowed even more, his snout crumpling up in a snarl.

-What, you want me to stop? I'm bugging you like you did to me not so long ago? Do you even remember all we went through, or are you too busy with your new life to spend some time with your old friend? Did you even ever come to check on me after I almost got killed, hm? Where did all of your "Captain" crap go?-

A long silence dropped dead on the room, and some of the patients who weren't asleep rose their heads, whispering to one another.

-Will you TALK TO ME?- Eerie shouted, slamming her tail against the table, making the bowl and compress fall from Ezra's grip. A veil of tears started to form on his deep blue eyes, his talons shaky.

-Oh so now you're the one crying huh? YOU? REALLY EZRA?- Eerie roared, clawing his face as Salvia slammed the door open and ran to hold her back from hurting him any more. Ezra backed off with a loud hiss, knocking over all the other utensils on the table and waking up all the other patients. Blood started dripping from his eyebrows.

-Leave him be!- An aquamarine Leafwing shouted, followed by the agreement of others.

-You should go, Eerie- Salvia whispered, firmly pushing her friend towards the door.

An expression of disbelief painted over Eerie's face, tears forming at the corners of her eyes. She looked around the room and saw everyone rush to Ezra and help him get back on his legs.

-Very well then.- she said with a shaky breath. She gulped down her tears and held her head up high.

She ran across the room and jumped out of the open window, soaring in the midnight sky.

As she flew over her and her mother's den she sighed and changed direction, heading south towards the river.

She strolled in the water under the moonlight, thinking about what Finch would've said to her. She didn't think he would've been proud of what she did, but she knew he would've called her Moonshine nonetheless, he would've given her a hug and given her ideas on what to do next.

'But Finch is not here anymore.'

She thought, her heart twisting and her throat aching.

For some reason, in her head, Finch's snout started to weirdly morph with Cozbi's. She reminded her so much of his friend and her heart ached even more.

She started walking towards the direction Cozbi took earlier, following her faint scent and the wet talon prints she left on the ground.

When she found her, the sun was peeking over the horizon and tinting everything with a bright golden light, making the landscape feel like a hazy fever dream.

Glimmering mist was floating all around Cozbi's snout, making her look almost unreal.

Eerie walked closer to the Goldwing, observing her carefully: She was indeed different from a regular Skywing, she had double spikes on her cheekbones, her nose horn twisted in a regal shape just like the fluffy eyebrows that covered her eyelids, painted with what seemed to be thick blue paint. Her ram horns swirled outwards, and she had weird spines that seemed almost fur-like.

Her pristine teal eyes flew open, making Eerie jump away with a yelp.

-Are you planning on lurking here anymore, oh mythical creature?- Cozbi joked while yawning.

-Sorry, I just didn't want to wake you up.- Eerie said.

The Goldwing observed Eerie for a moment, noticing her furrowed brows.

---What's up? you seem... weird- The Goldwing observed.

Eerie looked around for a moment, her head hanging low.

-I Just...- she sighed.

-you know Ezra, the one I told you about?-

Cozbi raised an eyebrow: -The annoying dragonet you fought with a lifetime ago?-

Eerie sighed: -Yeah. Well, this night, when we went our ways, I wanted to give Salvia my bandages back...and I found him.-

Cozbi lowered her head to listen, her interest caught. Eerie explained to her what happened at the healer's and then sat in silence as Cozbi thought ruefully.

-Hmm... and does this upset you?- She asked calmly.

Eerie was about to respond when a knot formed in her throat, so she just resorted to nodding.

Cozbi opened a wing and wrapped it around Eerie's back: -Well... I know a spot.-

A couple of hours later they were both standing in the middle of nowhere, with tall strands of yellow grass surrounding them.

The sun was now rising and blinded them both. A wild tiger was wandering a couple of tails away from them.

Cozbi crouched down in-between the grass, her orange scales perfectly matching the tall grass. -Look, it's a tiger! stay down.- She grabbed Eerie's wing, lowering her to her level.

The animal walked closer to them, Eerie observed its blood red and orange fur, the thick black stripes painting its back and the white chunks of white fur that framed the oddly short snout. She held her breath as the animal inched closer to them, stroking its head on Cozbi's neck, as Cozbi did the same while emitting a low growl.

The tiger took a big deep breath and growled back at them, lowered its head, and slowly walked away, leaving Eerie in awe.

The DewWing stayed still for an extra moment as the animal disappeared into the tall grass:

- Now what was THAT?!- she hardly contained her enthusiasm.

Cozbi chuckled:- I told you, a tiger!-

Eerie rubbed her talons on her snout, her eyes big with wonder: - I've never seen one before! It has the exact same stripes as you! What did you do with your head? Why did it approach you instead of fleeing? It was almost as big as ME!-

-Hey, slow down, one question at a time!- Cozbi laughed, inched closer to Eerie and whispered: -There's a legend... One that says that when the Gods still roamed the earth, the tigers were already here. They were kings of the savannah. They were just so beautiful that the goddess of fire Chari decided to gift it's beautiful patterns to her own tribe: the Firescales.-

Eerie looked even more confused: -Firescales?-

Cozbi nodded:- My ancestors, and the ancestors of Skywings and Mudwings, too. They used to look a little bit like me, but they were beautiful. They were the strongest out of the Four Ancients, they had blood red scales and blue wings and they used to breathe golden fire!- Cozbi's eyes were shining with a light as old as the gods themselves.

Eerie couldn't get to close her mouth and eyes who were wide open as she listened to the stories of the Four Ancient tribes that came before her.

Cozbi had told her there were the Firescales and the Shadowscales, who wore the Night herself on their wings. But also the Aurorascales, who were guided by Pheria.

-You are strange, though. You come from the Aurorascales, but Ultio seems to have chosen you, Eerie.-

Cozbi said while opening Eerie's wings for a better look.

The Dewwing's brain was about to melt on the spot. 'How come I have never known this? Why didn't my mother, nor the council ever tell me this?'

-And what did the Aurorascales look like?- She whispered under her breath, lying down on the grass with Cozbi.

-Oh trust me, they were divine. Some say they weren't even real. Their scales shone with all the colors Pheria could've given them, they had the clouds as wings and the Sun as eyes, water ripples glimmered wherever they walked, and light followed their paths. They're ancestors to rainwings, icewings and leafwings.-

Eerie observed Cozbi from the side as she narrated with all her heart.

-Well, wow- Eerie just mumbled, her talons tucked on her chest.

-I know, right? That's the same reaction every dragonet has whenever they hear about them.-

A pause followed Cozbi's words.

-How come you never heard of them?-

Eerie looked away: -I guess I was just too busy worrying about my place down here in the tribe to wonder about the ancestors up there.-

Cozbi sighed:- Your mother didn't tell you?-

Eerie shook her head reluctantly.

-I hope you can find your mother and brother, Cozbi, you seem to really miss them.-

The Goldwing's look dimmed:-I hope I can find them too, my mother used to repeat these old stories all the time. I miss her-

-Yeah.- Eerie said.

Cozbi picked herself up and sat upright, looking Eerie in the eyes: -You don't miss anyone?-

The DewWing covered her eyes with her pitch black wings and took a deep sigh.

-Oh for Pheria, I do. So so bad.-

Cozbi chuckled: -Name?-

-He was named Finch, he was a Skywing. I bet you two would have gotten along really well.-

Eerie said while opening her wings flat on the ground and looking at the blue sky above.

-I wonder if he got home safe. You know, strangely enough he went home just a few weeks before you came here, and I worry the storm might have gotten him.-

Cozbi placed her snout on Eerie's wings and said: -I'm sure he got home safe, he's a smart dragon.-

Eerie nodded, now sleepy.

Cozbi laid down next to her and they napped under the morning sun.

In the late afternoon they returned to the inflorescence; Cozbi went back to her hiding spot, and Eerie followed the river to go back to her den.

When she got there, she found Ezra standing near the cave entrance, bandages on his left eye and lazily playing with a magpie on the ground.

Eerie was scared, her talons tingling with the instinct of running away, but by the time it would have taken her to hide in a bush, Ezra had noticed her.

He slowly walked up to her. She noticed only now that he was actually two heads taller than her and her stomach sunk to the ground. She was the one that had to look up to talk to him now.

They looked at each other in silence for long minutes, neither of them able to say anything.

Eerie sighed and closed her eyes while rubbing her temples with her wings.

-I'm sorry, Ezra. I really am. But you don't even talk to me anymore, what am I supposed to do?- She tried.

Ezra's eyebrow rose up in a shocked expression: -I don't know, maybe like, don't claw me?-

Eerie looked at her talons: -Listen, if you came here just to make me feel any worse I can tell you it's working and you can go already.-

Ezra looked at her with disappointment and said:- No, actually I just came here to tell you that Dreamstealer was looking for you, and was pissed when he didn't find you. So you better hurry.-

Eerie finally managed to look him in the eyes for the first time since Pheria knows when.

He had deep eyebags and his cheekbones stuck out of his face kind of like hers did.

-Are you even eating, Ezra?- She asked, reaching with a claw to touch his face.

Ezra flinched and backed away.

-It's not like it's any of your business anyways, but yes, don't you ever worry about me.- He said sourly.

Eerie watched Ezra walk away once again and yelled:- Ezra! listen, I am really sorry for what I did, I just... have a lot going on, alright?-

Ezra looked back briefly:- Is that an apology I hear? From the almighty Eeriedessa of Atheris?-

-Yes, I said I'm sorry and I mean it, Ezra.-

She knew she didn't really mean it, like always, but maybe she was believable enough this time.

Ezra shrugged: -I know you're not, Eerie, but I appreciate the effort.-

He walked away without a sound.

-For Pheria, that dragon is a pain in the scales.- She huffed while trotting inside her den. She was kind of happy he talked to her though.

The days passed and the sun rose and shone like always, but Eerie now felt more comfortable walking around during the night, when she was less likely to stumble across Ezra or an angry Dreamstealer saying she had to go fetch the dragonets that wandered too far while playing.

She had gone to check on Cozbi countless times now, but it seemed like she disappeared from her hide.

'Maybe she's going around greeting random tigers again' Eerie thought to herself, chuckling. 'I hope she's alright. I hope Finch is alright too.'

She was walking down the Path of Rain again, thinking about the wonderful tales Cozbi told her, wondering if Ultio really existed sometime in the past, if she could really hear her.

-Oh look who it is, the little Eerie!-

A male voice said from behind. She turned around to see a black snout contorted in an annoyed expression, looking at her severely.

-Hey 'Stealer, I did go fetch the lost dragonets today and I did tell Magnolia to keep her children in her den, I also picked up the algae Salvia asked and turned them in at the healer's.-

Dreamstealer sat next to Eerie, his tail draped in the water.

-Oh it's good to hear that, but I wasn't here to ask you that.-

Eerie's ears perked up as she fixed her gaze on the chief.

Dreamstealer was looking at the seemingly never ending water that circled the Path of Rain.

-Silencer's dragonets hatched last week, so we need another dragon for this moon. How do you feel about going into BeetleWing territory?-

He asked, his perpetual frown fixed on the horizon.

-Oh I'd love to actually! I also...-

-As long as you don't try to kill anyone else without my permission, you can use the dagger, yes.-

Eerie sighed with relief and gazed at the horizon in silence for a couple of moments.

-Wait, Silencer had hatchlings?! WHEN?!-

Dreamstealer hid a smile: -Yeah, with Reverence.-

Eerie looked at the chief, confused.

-But weren't you two together?- She mumbled.

Dreamstealer looked at her and raised his eyebrows: -What? No, she's been with Reverence for over two years now.-

-Oh. Well they'll be awesome mothers. Even though I'm kind of disappointed that... HEY! CHIEF! I WASN'T-

Dreamstealer was walking away at an impressive speed. Was he avoiding conversing anymore with Eerie?

She sat back down with a splash and rested her head on her talons.

'Damn, I was rooting for the murder couple...' she thought.

During her healing stages Eerie still trained at the best of her abilities; she certainly didn't want to lose the progress of a lifetime to a couple of broken ribs.

But today she was finally, finally returning to the Seeker's mangrove to go out on a scouting trip. Plus, as Bellflower had informed her, she would've been deputy to Dreamstealer! She honestly couldn't believe it herself, but it seemed like Salt Face was starting to loosen up to Eerie.

It was just before sunrise, the path of rain was a flat slate of water, and everything was immersed in the stillest of blues as nature started to wake up.

The Seekers were standing before Dreamstealer on the Path of Rain: Eerie this time was well equipped with her magpie dagger, thick gloves to cover her knuckles and a bunch of small pointy metal pins.

Ninphes was standing behind Eerie, her creepy grin always present.

Bellflower, surprisingly, had joined them too. Eerie noticed that she couldn't help but feel a wave of resentment towards the petit dragon. She had trained every day for five whole years in order to get nominated a Seeker, and still the council hesitated to call her name at the last gathering, whilst that brat got nominated just when she had turned five years old, making her the youngest Seeker ever chosen.

If she thought long enough about that, Eerie could feel all of her guts twisting and her spine arching with indignation.

But now she was the one nominated deputy, and Bellflower was meant to follow her orders, at least for this scouting.

There wasn't anything specifically wrong with the dragonet, just the way she was so seemingly perfect in every way: her glimmering Dewscapes shone in the freezing morning air, decorating her pitch black wings and her ice white eyes.

Her soft voice and politeness made everyone's gaze soften. Even Dreamstealer had more patience and seemed more forgiving towards her.

'It's not like she makes any mistakes anyways.' Eerie thought ruefully as other seekers joined the party.

An orange and purple older seeker called Cassiopeia arrived last and observed Eerie skeptically.

She rolled her eyes and sighed, waiting for Dreamstealer to talk.

-Today is going to be a long flight, we may even use more days than planned if rain gets in the way. Which will happen, I assure you. The last time we went to check there wasn't anything suspicious, but Queen Foglia talks about Skywings flying around the territory, so we better check that out.-

-Chief, couldn't that suspicious Skywing just be Eerie's pet going home?- Ninphes asked, all of her thirty-four teeth unsheathed as she grinned in an uncomfortable way.

Eerie gave her a death stare and growled: -No. Finch went home about three weeks ago now.-

Ninphes shrugged and giggled annoyingly.

Eerie was sure that if she jumped in that precise moment, she could've grabbed her neck at the perfect angle to be snapped like a twig.

-Sorry to interrupt Chief but, I've heard Ezra talk about Skywing assassins allied with Beetlewings, maybe they were one of those?-

Bellflower chimed in, her voice almost a whisper, which made Eerie's eyes roll to the sky once more.

Dreamstealer opened his wings to stop the flooding questions: -No one is sure of what or who they are. The Queen says they're from the Distant Kingdoms and I think she's right. Ninphes, Finch went home about a month ago like Eerie said, and Bell, I wouldn't trust a cowardly medicine dragon like Ezra on this kind of matter. For future reference.-

Bellflower nodded and sat down while letting out a sigh of relief.

Eerie took a deep breath and clapped her talons together, slapping loudly and making everyone jolt their heads up :-SO! Shall we start our journey? I feel like we're wasting a lot of time here, 'Stealer.-

She said, patting Dreamstealer on the back with her wing.

The chief looked at her with his Salt Face expression and rolled his eyes.

-You're not wrong. Let's go.- He took off in the opposite direction of the Path, going north-east towards the driest part of the savannah.

About halfway into the flight, when the sun was way beyond its highest point, Dreamstealer announced the storm they were expecting. Eerie let out a loooooong sigh that made half the party give dirty looks in her direction. A storm meant delay. Delay meant Cozbi could've returned at any point without Eerie knowing. That meant less savannah trips.

-You could've just said it if you didn't want to come!- Bellflower said jokingly, flying alongside Eerie.

'Oh for Ultio, I think I will commit murder after all.' Eerie thought, her ears flat against her neck.

-I do want to be here.- She replied, staring into the horizon emotionlessly.

-From the sound of that sigh it didn't seem like it- The dragonet continued.

Eerie slowly turned her head around to get a better look of the impertinent dragon.

She was smiling gracefully.

-I just have other stuff to do, too.- she mumbled.

Bellflower flew closer: -Like what? it doesn't seem like you have any friends to hang around with.-

Eerie unsheathed her teeth in a snarl:- Oh trust me I have plenty of friends, little one. You're just not one of them luckily.-

Bellflower's happy smile didn't move an inch: -Oh, and where are they?- She asked in the most innocent tone she could pull off.

Eerie stayed silent for long moments, her ears ringing with anger.

-Finch went home.- She whispered between her teeth.

-And the others?-

-What?-

-You said you have plenty of friends.-

Eerie could swear that smoke was coming out of her ears.

-Listen Bellflower, there are five dragons here, excluding you and me. I would very, very much like it if you could go and annoy them instead of me. Especially because we're about to fly right into a massive thunderstorm and if you get distracted you will get struck by lightning. Not that I care anyways.-

Bellflower laughed with her pristine voice: -You're hilarious, Eerie. I don't want to talk with the others, I want to talk with you.-

-Oh right, to make me feel miserable about my life?-

-No, to understand who was that Skywing you were talking to not long ago.-

Eerie's heart skipped a beat and she forgot to flap her wings for a moment, losing balance and almost hitting a pillar near her.

-What are you talking about?- She asked, her breath short.

Bellflower looked at the sky calmly: -I was coming back from the river when I saw you talk with a massive weird looking orange Skywing... but if I remember well, Finch is wine red, and certainly doesn't have stripes.-

Eerie's head was spinning with worry and her talons were shaking as she thought of what to say to Bellflower.

-Listen, I just...-

-It's okay, I won't tell anyone.- Bellflower whispered.

-No, you really can't, listen. Cozbi is my friend, I wouldn't want anything in the world to happen to her, ever. If you tell someone about this, they will get her, hurt her and interrogate her.-

-Oh so she's named Cozbi. How come you're so anxious, is she really a spy?-

-What? Of course not, but they will all believe so.-

-They didn't with Finch.-

-Well, he had his wings ripped apart and no useful information whatsoever, he was a simple soldier. And also he wouldn't say anything to anyone.-

Bellflower frowned: -So you're saying that Cozbi would? She knows something she shouldn't? Did you tell her anything about the tribe?-

Eerie panicked: -No, of course not! i just... i just don't-

-You don't trust your own tribe, Eerie?-

-No, I...-

Bellflower flew closer to the green dragon.

-Eerie, you value your friendship with a random Skywing, more than the endangered tribe that raised you and nominated you with the highest role possible? What is your problem?-

Eerie's ears were ringing with panic now, her chest rising up and down frantically as she anxiously flew closer to whisper to Bellflower: -I don't! I just don't know where she really comes from and I don't want to lose her like I did with Finch...-

Bellflower snorted with disapproval: -Oh okay, so you're just egoistic then. You want your friend all for yourself even if you KNOW SHE IS A DANGER FOR THE TRIBE, DON'T KNOW WHERE SHE COMES FROM OR WHO IS ALLIED WITH?-

She gasped for air, full of rage and spite: -Oh, Eerie I knew you were a miserable dragon but I didn't think you could go this far.-

Eerie's eyes were welling up in tears of frustration as she noticed Dreamstealer flying slower to hear what the yelling was all about.

Eerie stopped mid air and gritted her teeth: -Listen, it's not what it looks like.-

Bellflower shook her head in disapproval: -Oh no trust me, I know what it is. You're just a lonely, pathetic, scrawny dragon who will cling to the first dragon that shows any sign of affection because they don't know her well enough to realize that she is a sociopath.-

Eerie looked at her dead in the eyes for a wingbeat to then scream: -NO! SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP BELL! SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!-

She was slamming her talons on her ears repeatedly when she jumped onto Bellflower and started clawing her mid-air.

-I'M NOT A FUCKING SOCIOPATH I'M NOT! COZBI KNOWS ME!- She screamed as they fell from the sky, Eerie pinning down Bellflower that was snarling and spitting smoke everywhere.

Dreamstealer and the seekers stopped mid air to stare at the fight going down.

The chief growled under his breath as he gazed at the slim figure of Eerie holding down Bellflower towards the ground, falling at an incredible speed.

Cassiopeia inched closer to Dreamstealer: -Chief what the hell is wrong with that dragon?- Dreamstealer let out a long sigh and grunted:- She's not the problem, Bell is.-

-What?- The seeker demanded.

-She's been teasing Eerie for the whole flight, and she perfectly knows about her... issues.- Dreamstealer turned around and continued flying under the soft rain that had now reached the group.

Cassiopeia looked first at the couple of growling dragons on the ground, then at the chief.

Ninphes flew closer to the purplish dragon: -Just leave them.-

And followed Dreamstealer.

-But what if Eerie hurts Bell?- He asked the group that was moving forward.

-Then that's Bell's problem!- A magenta and blue seeker yelled.

Meanwhile, Eerie was holding Bellflower on the ground of the savannah, the rain dripping on her snout as she growled: -I swear to Pheria and Ultio if you dare tell someone about Cozbi, I will find you in your den and cut your throat from one ear to the other while you sleep. You may have a pretty smile and be a prodigy and all that, but you're not stronger or faster than me.-

Her nostrils were fuming swirls of smoke all around her horns and getting in Bell's eyes, which were stoically staring into Eerie's.

-I won't tell anyone like I said, but because I choose to. Not because of your stupid threats.-

Eerie's eyes narrowed:- And why is that?-

-Because when a Skywing attack will wipe out half the tribe and make you grieve on their graves, I will be there to tell you I warned you.-

She smiled prettily at Eerie, and kicked her out of the way.

The green Dewwing snorted sarcastically: -Alright little one, you really need to stop hanging around with Ezra.-

-Sounds like he prefers hanging out with me rather than you anyway.- Bellflower hissed.

Eerie stood incredibly still for a moment, the offence piercing through her heart like the deadliest of daggers.

-Okay I'm done with your little jokes, sprout. We better catch up with the rest of the party or we will be stuck here.-

She mumbled under the rain.

Bellflower gasped dramatically:- Oh for Pheria! To be stuck here in the savannah, under a thunderstorm, with a sociopath?-

She shook her head vigorously and took off into the grey sky.

'She's lucky I promised not to kill anyone.'

Eerie thought as she flew past her.



It was night when they arrived at the Beetlewing border.

They could tell that that was where their territory started because of the humidity of the savannah. Instead of tigers and yellow grass they could now see prairies and lakes, with sparse sequoia trees that circled the waters.

-So what are we looking for exactly?- Eerie asked Dreamstealer, who was flying ahead of the group, positioned in a V shape.

-Skywings, particularly red and blue ones, and any Beetlewing to interrogate.-

Eerie nodded and gazed at the landscape carefully.

It had been almost two hours of flying around the borders and checking the lakes every now and then, but they had found pretty much nothing.

They landed to rest their wings and Cassiopeia whispered to Dreamstealer: -Chief, maybe we should go back now. The moons are high in the sky and we need some light to come back home.-

The big Nightwing was gazing around him in the mist, ears perked up to hear any sounds of steps.

-Not yet Cas. We're missing something.-

Ninphes rolled her eyes:- Is this more of a feeling you're missing something or you know you're missing something, Chief?-

-I know it.- He turned around to look at the sequoias.

-Chief, isn't it weird that we haven't found anyone? Like, not even a Beetlewing? The Queen said they've been pushing on our borders.- Bellflower raised a timid voice and the sweetest eyes she could muster.

-That's exactly what I'm trying to understand here, Bell, but thank you for your insight.-

The dragonet looked at Eerie with a smug face and mimicked with her mouth "thank you".

-'Stealer, maybe we should just go. It won't be long until the moons go down again and the midday savannah sun is really too hot for most of us to fly under.-

Eerie suggested.

-I didn't know your scales were that weak, Eerie.- Dreamstealer commented, still looking carefully around him.

-It's not about my scales, but the whole group.-

-Why so worried to come back home, Deputy?-

Bellflower whispered under her breath. Eerie growled and mimicked a cut-throat gesture to the dragonet. Cassiopeia looked at her, horrified.

Dreamstealer sighed: -It's alright. We can go now, got nothing to report this time.-

They were all up in the air when Ninphes asked: -Hey Eerie, are those red flowers, blood, Skywings, or bloody Skywings?-

She nudged Eerie on the ribs with her elbow.

-What?-

She asked as she looked where Ninphes was pointing at.

She could see an indistinct reddish-orange stain half hidden by branches and fallen trunks.

She flew closer to inspect the scene: Two Skywings were dead on the forest floor, one was

an older and bigger female the color of the sun, and the other one a slightly smaller and

bulky male the color of burnt gold. Their faces looked like they had been slashed multiple

times, their wings torn and crumpled in painful ways, and their chests both pierced by sticks

at a perfectly straight angle. The facial features and limbs were almost unrecognizable, half

eaten by scavenging creatures and the passage of time.

-These look like pretty old corpses.- Cassiopeia commented.

Dreamstealer landed at Eerie's right: -Any of these familiar to you?-

He asked. Eerie shook her head. They did look familiar to her, but she wouldn't have risked saying it.

She could recognize those were Goldwings, not common Skywings. The smaller male

looked frighteningly similar to Cozbi, the spiky mane curled the same way and the horns had

the same ram-like shape.

'She was looking for someone.' Eerie thought. Suddenly everything clicked in her mind:

those were Cozbi's mother and brother, dead in what should've been their ally's territory.

Eerie gulped down the rising waves of panic in her throat as the seekers discussed what to

do with the bodies and what to report to the queen.

She noticed Bellflower was staring intensely at her, trying to pick up any signs from her expressions.

Eerie snarled and circled the group, showing her back to the dragonet.

Hours later they finally took off to return home, and the flight had been strangely silent, everyone was thinking about what kind of animal or beast could've done that to two Skywings.

-They both looked very big and strong. It must've been an even stronger creature to do that.- Bellflower said to Dreamstealer.

-Yeah, most probably either another Skywing, a really big Nightwing or some kind of Tidewing from the Depths, but I doubt one of those would come all the way up here just to kill two dragons.-

He thought out loud.

-Maybe they were important dragons?- Cassiopeia suggested.

They all fell silent and reflected under the rising sun.

-What do you think, Eerie?- Nymphes asked.

-Me? Oh, a Beetlewing definitely.-

Dreamstealer's look brightened: -Elaborate?-

-Their serrated claws can pierce skin very well, they got those huge mandibles that can crumble wings just fine, and are strong enough to push a whole stick through a dragon's chest without problem.-

-It was also their territory.- Cassiopeia agreed.

-But why would they? Aren't they allies with Skywings?- Bellflower asked the Chief.

Eerie held herself from shaking her head 'They are allies with Skywings, not Goldwings.' she thought to herself.

But why would a Beetlewing search for only two Goldwings? She remembered Cozbi saying that a huge storm disrupted their trip and divided her from her family, so maybe while they were wandering in Beetlewing territory they stumbled upon the wrong dragon? But what was the reason to kill them so brutally? And did their queen know about that?

Eerie was looking at the scorching sun rising on the landscape while mumbling under her breath.

-Maybe we should ask the queen!- She announced, turning to the rest of the party, that had been intensely looking at her for the past few minutes as she figured it out.

Dreamstealer raised an eyebrow: - and why's that?-

-You know how many years I studied before getting the seeker's role 'Stealer, right?-

He rolled his eyes: -yes.-

-And you know what's written in the Book of Present Tribes: hierarchy and culture, chapter 237, paragraph 5?-

-Get to the damn point, Eerie.- Nymphes hissed.

-Alright, alright, basically Beetlewing soldiers don't have permission to go forward with killing foreigners without getting verbal approval from a superior first. And the superior always has instructions from the queen. It's almost like a long chain. So we just need to ask the queen why she gave the green light to kill her own allies.-

Cassiopeia rolled his eyes: - It all seems like a wonderful plan, Eerie, but you may be forgetting the fact that we are not exactly on our best term with Beetlewings at the moment. They keep on pushing on our territories. Asking an audience with Queen Carrion without permission from Queen Foglia first is the last thing we want to do. Especially since we're

seekers. In other words murderers, spies, killers and gatherers? Certainly we're not ambassadors.-

Dreamstealer was hovering in the air, eyebrows pushing on his eyes in a thoughtful look.

-He's right, seekers are meant to keep a low profile and operate in secret. Plus a whole trip to the other side of the continent just to talk with a queen who wants us dead seems like a waste of time and resources. Our tribe needs us for protection-

Eerie's eyes narrowed: -But we'll never know who killed them and why! If we don't find out and stop them, then they might think we don't care! What if they came closer to our territory and murdered one of us next? We need to know who it is!-

'Cozbi could be next!' she screamed in her head, fiddling with her claws as she inspected the expressions of her companions.

-I understand your worries, but right now we can't do anything without consultation with Queen Foglia first. I will talk to her and we will figure this out, maybe she can write a peace treaty for just the time it will take her to send an ambassador to discuss the matter.-

Eerie still felt very anxious and on edge, but she agreed with Dreamstealer and they all flew east towards the Dewwing pillars.

It was past sundown when they arrived at the seeker's mangrove. Eerie splashed with her claws on the shallow water at the roots of the structure and was greeted by Salvia and Glass Leaf.

-Everyone alright? Looks like these have been some pretty rough days weather wise.

Anyone hurt by the storm or weird looking plants over at the Beetlewings' ? - Salvia asked, hopping on her three legs closer to Dreamstealer and Ninphes.

-Everyone is okay, just tired. Thank you Salvia.- He booped his head with hers and she sat near Eerie, controlling her body for any bruises. Eerie sighed and rolled her eyes to the sky as Salvia grabbed her claws and inspected her scarlet stained knuckles.

-May Reverence fall! Can you tell me what this is, friend?- Salvia said with an authoritarian tone.

Eerie stayed silent. Her eyes fixed on the four moons above.

-She and Bellflower had some... disagreements, let's say.- Dreamstealer explained.

Salvia's look hardened: -Is that so? Bellflower? Eerie, she's a dragonet! Oh wait until mother Atheris hears this one, Eerie will come to the healer's den completely bruised!- She giggled, letting her talons go.

Eerie huffed and dropped her head.

Dreamstealer was now discussing with the rest of the group on what to tell the queen when Glass Leaf came forward and started taking Eerie's equipment off.

-This sure is a great dagger, Eerie.- She commented as she took the magpie knife with her fire burnt claws and turned it around to get a better look of the wavy blade.

Eerie looked at the tall dragon, she had an androgynous look, sharp jaw and straight horns. Her scales were the color of the dawning sky and beautiful dewdrops hung from her spikes.

-I know, right? It's the most beautiful.- She agreed.

-Oh not only is it beautiful, but this blade is made with Udamant. It's one of the metals that moon Reverence gave us. It can pierce through anything, even bones.-

Eerie looked intently at the blacksmith that gazed at the dagger with wonder.

-You see this?- Glass Leaf asked, pointing at the greenish shade the hilt had at the center, right over the magpie's emerald eyes.

-Yes-

-You'd think this is emerald, right? And all around here oxidation. But in fact, if you do this...- She took the dagger and lightly blew smoke over it to then dip it in the water at their feet, making the ash shrivel away in the current.

-You can see it's true colors.- Eerie could now see that instead of a green magpie bird, the dagger was actually carved with a beautiful ultramarine blue and white magpie. Like the ones that always bothered her in the woods. Its eye was actually made of moonstone.

-Whoa- Eerie whispered, taking the dagger back into her talons.

-It's actually... I didn't know- she stuttered.

Glass Leaf giggled: -Don't worry, it's not your fault, many are the secrets of the blades. The pigmentation is actually caused by the scales of the dragon who uses it. Back when Dreamstealer owned it, this looked like a crow, because of his onyx scales. Colors like black and red stain the most.- She said, pointing at the bird. Eerie looked at her emerald talons in wonder.

-Thank you for showing me, Glass Leaf.- The blacksmith bowed her head and walked away with the equipment, leaving Eerie with the dagger.

-She's really good.- Salvia commented, hinting at the figure of Glass Leaf that was now a shadow on the Path of Rain.

Eerie fixed her gaze on her friend: -I didn't know this! It's so cool. I feel like there are so many things I don't know, Salvia.-

The healer patted Eerie on the back with her pale wings: -It's alright, you can't know everything all the time, all we can do is choose the best option as it comes to us. We have no need to worry too far into the future, because...-

-It has yet to be woven, yes you've told me a million times.- Eerie smiled.

-That's because it's true, and it's never harmful to repeat it to yourself sometimes.-

Salvia grinned as she went to check on Bellflower.

Eerie walked to Dreamstealer to hear what they decided on telling the Queen, to then wish them all a good resting time.

She walked on the Path slowly while dragging her tail in the freshwater. That night the infinite plate of water was surrounded by mist and lit up by the two moons Reverence and Oracle. She looked up at Reverence, observing its ice blue aura, its surface was sprinkled with small craters and ice, making it look like a raw diamond. She once again wondered if the tales were true, if Ultio really chose her, if Reverence really gave her her powers, and if so, how? And would she ever have to take responsibility for this in the future? Chosen, but for what? She ruefully mumbled under her breath as she walked to Cozbi's hide, hoping to find her this time around.

Fresh talon prints made Eerie let out a sigh of relief, a familiar tail with a chunk of fur at the end greeted her. The seeker reached out with a talon and played with it for a while before entering the small cave that was half hidden by big leaves.

-My, my, is that the legendary Eeriedessa of the Dewwings I see at the entrance of my dwelling?- the Goldwing whispered as she gathered together a bunch of leaves and shiny crystals.

Eerie did a half-bow and chuckled.

-It's good to see you're back, Cozbi! You should be more careful with the prints you leave behind, it's too easy to find you.-

she commented: - What are those things you're so badly trying to hide from me?- she inquired.

-Oh these? Nothing, nothing at all worth mentioning.-

She said, shielding her view with her wings.

-What? Let me see, they're shiny!- Eerie protested.

-Hey, I know you're like one of those filthy magpies, but you can't get the shiny things right now.- Cozbi said.

-But I want to see them.- Eerie imposed, looking Cozbi straight in the eyes.

The Skywing hesitated for a second to then sigh and give in: - If you insist, but I'm telling you they're not ready and you may want to wait.-

-You're just making me more curious!- Eerie said as she closed Cozbi's wing and walked up to the bunch of shiny things.

She uncovered the leaves to find a little ball of silk, she opened it to find a cracked green and teal crystal along with some small golden rings dappled with dried chitin drops.

-Oh, these are beautiful...- She said, taking the green crystal in her talons and rolling it back and forth under the moonlight to get a better view.-

-I know, but as I said, they're not ready, so you can't get them now.- Cozbi said, taking back the little clump of jewelry.

Eerie smiled, to then remember the reason she came there.

-I, um, Cozbi I have to tell you something... We went patrolling with the seekers yesterday and we found something.- She hesitated.

-Just tell me already- Cozbi smiled, inching closer to Eerie.

-We found bodies. Goldwing bodies.-

-Oh, that's weird.- Cozbi's eyes narrowed.

-Weird? That's suspect! And you may not want to hear this, but I think they were your family.- Eerie whispered under her breath. She stayed silent as she watched Cozbi elaborate that information.

-What do you exactly mean by that?- Cozbi muttered, her look lost.

-You've told me you were looking for your family when I found you, and one of them was really similar to you... the horns, the crest, the stripes... I think they were your mother and brother.-

Cozbi was sitting in silence, her shoulders hunched as she dropped her head to her talons and cried silently. Thin lines of tears mixed with blue paint stained her cheeks. Eerie hugged her friend tightly with her wings and whispered: -I'm sorry Cozbi, I can't imagine how you feel.-

Cozbi was shaking like a leaf in Eerie's wings, not from sadness, but from rage. Fuming rage echoed in her voice as she gritted her teeth and asked :- Where was this?-

-Beetlewing borders... What I don't understand is why do this to their own allies...-

Cozbi pushed Eerie away, a violent flame behind her eyes:- Oh no no no, don't be mistaken Eerie, they are not allies to us. Those insects are allied with Skywings, and Skywings absolutely despise us Goldwings, even if we were here first. Even if WE, WE WERE THE ONES CRAFTED BY GODDESS CHARI HERSELF. WE WERE THE ONES TO- she was interrupted by a sob that grabbed her throat and made her fall silent, in tears.

Eerie looked at her friend in pity, not knowing what to do.

-Those insects, whoever did this... oh may Reverence fall, I will find them and destroy them. Destroy whatever and whoever they care about...-

She swore and cursed the tribe until she had no more air in her lungs.

-Cozbi, you should lie down. Try to have some sleep... You know, with Pheria comes reason.-

The Orange Goldwing agreed and went to the narrowest corner of the cave, shoving herself between the dry grass and moss they took from the savannah.

Eerie stood over Cozbi until she fell silent, and stepped outside of the cave.

-Eerie, can you stay?- A small whisper came from behind the leaves.

Eerie hurried back in: -Yes-

She curled up near Cozbi, their tails draped over one another as the moons above guarded them.

