

A plastic clattering sound echoes in the aisle of the mostly empty supermarket. You jolt and feel a chill up your spine, you hurry to turn towards it, messing with your totebag. It's heavy with books. Too heavy, you didn't plan ahead. You idiot. Your eyes meet with the fallen item - it's just a bottle of shampoo. Down you crouch to grab it, sighing in relief, your glasses fogging up because of the surgical mask. You can't see anything and when you stand up to spot the vague suggestion of a woman standing in front of you, you mumble a little "Sorry". You idiot.

She stares at you when you walk past, you can tell from the corner of your eye. But you think it's fine. You always dress a bit strangely, just so people can't exactly tell what gender you are, that must be why she's staring. When you come out of the shop, you pull down your mask and let out a sigh of relief. You'd always been clumsy, a bit clumsier than others. Even naked, you'd bump into things, you'd have trouble turning, you'd have issues with fitting into doorways. You didn't know how or why, you just knew that apparently, doors had a grudge against you. It became mutual pretty quickly. You idiot.

Since when was it this way? Well, your childhood had always been pretty foggy. You just remember that one day, the woman who brought you into this world decided to hand you to a Dragon. You don't really remember what the Dragon was like, you don't really remember anything about it. All you remember is there was a you before the Dragon, and a you after the Dragon. The you before the Dragon was meek, the you after the Dragon was.. strange. Out of pace. You'd heard from some people that there were more than one Dragon, too. You assumed everyone came with their own Dragon, frankly. Didn't it make sense? It was comfortable to think that everyone around you was fighting the same battles as you were. A comfortable, cushy lie. You idiot.

You talked to people and asked them about their Dragon. They acted confused. They never had a Dragon. But how could that be? You had a Dragon, your mother gave you to one. Wasn't it normal? It's when the doubt started and the questions came. What if you were just imagining the Dragon? Was the Dragon a bad thing, a good thing? You weren't really sure, but you began understanding that it wasn't very normal for a mother to hand their child to a Dragon. Dragons are scary. Dragons tear people in half with gigantic fangs, Dragons burn people to a crisp, Dragons crush people with their huge limbs. But you thought that, well, since you had been given to a Dragon, there must have been a reason for it. You idiot.

You never knew if there was a reason for it. Maybe the Dragon promised to your mother, maybe it was one of those romance stories about a human and a monster loving each other. Maybe your mother just really wanted to see what you'd like with a Dragon. Morbid curiosity was a thing, wasn't it? There didn't need to be a reason for violence, violence justified itself. Your mother was mean to you because- Was your mother mean to you? Before the Dragon? You always struggled to remember, the Dragon didn't leave you with many memories of who you were before your mother gave you to it. If you focused, well, you'd just remember black, inky nothing. Maybe a house at one point. But never the Dragon's Den. The Dragon didn't have a Den. But then, was the Dragon even real? You idiot.

Of course it was real. It was real because at some point, you had a horrible day. It started out terribly, it continued terribly, and it ended terribly. You were trying your best, of course. That's always what you told yourself, though you didn't really believe it. You could always be doing more, couldn't you? You're just like them, the others. You're just like the others who had never been given to a Dragon. You're perfectly normal. Keep pretending, keep bumping into things. You idiot.

And so, your horrible day. You were squished in the tramway home, you were squashed in the train home. Everything was so loud, everyone was so strange. You didn't want to look at anyone because everyone was looking at you. Their eyes stared at you, their words spoke of you. Frankly, if you didn't know better, you'd start thinking their hands would grab you. They'd grab you and tear you apart, only to be wiped clean and let their mouths speak of a job well done. You weren't sure whether it was your fault or not that you were given to the Dragon. Perhaps you didn't want to find out. You sprinted on the last hundred meters leading to your home, you didn't care what people thought. When home, you got caught in a jacket that you were sure was hanging a fair distance away from you. Of course, you didn't bother to look. You idiot.

Tears had already begun filling your eyes. Your breath was shallow, your heart was beating. You wanted to go back in your room and never leave it. Yet when you rushed in the hallway, something caught your eye. You always gave furtive glances to yourself in the mirror of the bathroom, hoping you'd maybe like what you see this time. But when you looked this time, something felt wrong. You stopped in your tracks, turned and faced the mirrors. You idiot.

Your eyes were of a pure sapphire blue, slitted down the middle in a reptilian fashion. Two horns popped up from hair that had been left scruffy and disorganized from the bit of rain you'd caught on your way home. Your slacked jaw flashed you with the sight of canines that were larger than normal, and your wobbling to stand against the wall of the hallway made your tailbone hurt. You looked behind yourself and finally understood why you knocked that shampoo bottle over. Why you knocked everything over, why you touched people without meaning to. You finally started to see beyond that comfortable lie, and you understood what the Dragon did. You saw what it left on your body. You understood that the battles you were facing weren't the same as everyone else's. They were so, so, so much worse. You idiot.

There was a tail popping out of your jeans. How it did, you didn't know. You didn't care, you didn't think about it. It was covered in cream scales on top, and pure white on the bottom. It completely froze when you looked at it. You completely froze when you looked at it. Everything started to make a little more sense. People didn't stare at you, they stared at your horns. They didn't stare at you, they stared at your eyes. They didn't stare at you, they stared at your tail. You idiot. You fool.

People out there didn't stare at you. They never did. They stared at the Dragon's Mark. They stared at what the Dragon did to you because they didn't understand it. They didn't understand what the Dragon is, what the Dragon does, what the Dragon leaves in its wake. They didn't understand any of it, they'll never understand any of it.

You idiot.