

## Dragon Dreams

There I was, lounging across my bed engrossed in my latest fantasy novel. From down the hall, I hear my mother yell,

*“Bella, turn that light off, you’re up late reading again. Don’t let me see you with that book in your hands”.*

Silently I roll my eyes, she would never get my obsession with dragons. I knew they were out there but, lurking deep under reality’s surface. I spring quickly off my bed and turn off the light, plunging my room into darkness. Crawling back onto my bed I pull the covers over my head and grab my torch, determined to return to shape-shifting Draki and their world of magic.

*‘Just one more chapter’* I say to myself as my eyes grow heavy with sleep.....

I wake in the darkness with a jolt, a far-off noise pulling me from my unconsciousness. As my eyes adjust to the scene around me, I stare in wonder. Tall, dense trees lurk over me, and the wet dew lingers in the coolness of the air. My fingers dig deep into the soft, earthy soil around me. Bursts of green and brown fill my vision of the forest before me. Unseen birds sing a haunting song, and in the distance, I hear the splash of a rushing stream. Recognition of this place prickles in the back of my mind.

*I have seen this place; I know this place, I’m sure.*

Then it hits me. I am inside my own fantasy book! There beside me lays my book but as I pick it up, it explodes in a shower of twinkling lights, like a thousand tiny fireflies floating off into the air. I heave myself up quickly and chase after the shimmering mist which lead me deeper into the thick forest, it’s thick canopy blocking most of the natural light.

From just ahead I hear the rustle of quick movement, the flap of wings and see the glint of blue, black, and fiery red scales vanish behind the trees. *The characters from my story!* I call out,

*“Hello? Jacinda, Azure is that you?”*

I look around excitedly as two huge, beautiful Draki emerge from the dimness. My eyes grow wide with wonder and awe. They are just how I imagined them, sleek and elegant with glistening scales of vibrant colours. Jacinda, a fire breathing Draki with scales in all colours of a burnt sunset, and Azure, a petite water Draki, in every possible shade of the brilliant water. I pinch my arm to assure that this wasn't a dream.

*“Bella”, Jacinda murmurs with a soft whisper, “come join us, we are headed for a swim in the lake”*.

*“It's so amazing to meet you, I would love to join you”*, I breath in excitement.

In a quick motion, Jacinda whirls around me and bows low. I scramble as quickly and gently as possible onto the wide back of the stunning Draki. As we ascend through the mist of the forest, her hot skin is warm under my palms. I have to catch my breath as the sweet wind rushes past my face and the view of the bruised purple mountains rise before me. With a laugh, we started to descend towards the dark lake in the distance. We spend time laughing, and playing, frolicking in cool, calm waters of the deep, dark lake. Jacinda and Azure tell me about their life with the Pride and their home in the mountains shrouded by mist, hidden away from the prying eyes of hunters and the human world.

With a sudden snap of her head, a look of fear flitters across Jacinda's face.

*“Hunters!”* she breathes as sounds of gun fire, chopper blades and roaring vehicles come into ear shot. Azure dives deep under the surface of the dark water and settles on the murky

bottom of the lake, blending in with the iridescent blues of the water. Motioning me onto her back, I grip Jacinda's rough scales as we speed towards the water just as the dark shadow of the chopper appears in the sky and two dark vehicles emerge from the trees.

"*GET THEM!*" I hear the hunter shout. Heart in my throat, we hit the surface of the water with a jarring jolt and slide through the wet darkness towards a well concealed cave in the side of the jagged rocky edge of the lake. I can hear sounds of the hunters hot on our tail. My head pounds and heart beats erratically.

*They CAN NOT catch us; they will kill these beautiful creatures.*

We gasp for breath as we pop us inside an underwater cave and a rocky outcrop where we can climb out of the water. A look of fear passes between us, as the shadows of the hunters pursuing us flicker just outside the cave.

"*They're in the water*" I say with a shaky voice,

"*We'll be ok,*" whispers Jacinda, "*just stay still and silent*" she breathes, as my teeth chatter with cold and fear.

As the hunters approach our hiding spot, a familiar sparkling mist suddenly appears before us. As the mist dances, particles swirl together to form a familiar shape –

"*My book!*" I whisper, "*quickly, grab on!*"

She places her hand in mine a split second before I touch the surface of the book. In my peripheral I see the dark, menacing head of a hunter break the surface of the cave water just as Jacinda and I, disappear into the shimmering light....

Waking with a gasp I feel the warm, soft pillow under my head. It's still dark as I lift my head groggily and look around at my familiar bedroom.

*Was it all a dream?* The rustle of paper and something sharp next to my head draws my attention. Quickly opening the folded paper, a note reads:

*"I'm safe, this is so you remember me"*

- *Jacinda*

I peer down to see a beautiful, fiery red dragon scale. As the bright moon shines, I feel a slow smile creep onto my face and disappear into the darkness...