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***This book is dedicated to***

***Danielle Juno (DJ)***

***The best friend anyone could ever have***

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**Table of Contents**

[**Opener:**](#_1yzecjm1rhc9) **1**

[**Chapter 1: Appearing**](#_citn1p2stom9) **2**

[**Chapter 2: Showing**](#_anme8jrahjy1) **14**

[**Chapter 3: Discovering**](#_451l96sxmvqd) **25**

[**Chapter 4: Lamenting**](#_hmif3xmfy810) **38**

[**Chapter 5: Planning**](#_1np0gquz85sp) **48**

[**Chapter 6: Reviving**](#_ff12wkw0pf98) **69**

[**Chapter 7: Fighting**](#_mr1e1x4y7618) **79**

[**Chapter 8: Winning**](#_391brsxq61r) **88**

[**Chapter 9: Leaving**](#_pwuc4knh7ygq) **97**

[**Chapter 10: Running**](#_oeyuwjwk3z5t) **108**

[**Character Relations:**](#_35r6hs7rh0t6) **117**

[**Author Bio**](#_qos37z696hpy) **120**

# **Opener:**

The high-pitched, scream-like roar from a Dreadstrider shattered the sky and broke the beautiful, morning sunrise. Its rider, Kaizar the Sneak, otherwise known as just “Kai,” gripped lightly to its sturdy, leather saddle and carefully crafted dragon armor, while scanning the bright horizon with searching eyes. It took no longer than ten seconds for him to find his target: a small fleet of War Lord ships swiftly floating by the coast of a heavily-forested island. Behind him on the saddle sat another Viking, who was not nearly as majestic *or* experienced in dragon-flying as his comrade; but, nonetheless, radiated the tell-tale signs of a seasoned warrior. With an almost imperceptible nudge, the Dreadstider and its two riders shot off at an even greater speed toward the small fleet of vessels. I, on the other hand, swerved in behind them and nudged my Deadly Scuttleclaw to keep up. It was, in fact, impossible, but the defense of my island depended upon it. Behind me too was a fellow Viking; actually, my dad. He was short, but strong and had the dragon maneuvering skills of one who had flown many missions. The early morning air was pure and the water beneath us was smooth and glistened like clear glass. As we bore down upon the ships, I noticed that they were well prepared. Gleaming spear launchers, bola cannons, and archers lined the ship – ready for action. This was the moment of truth. With backup confirmed but far off, it was the decision of Kai as to whether to commence the attack. It turned out that Kai did not make the decision – his comrade did. With a well-known Berserker howl, he sent himself and Kai into an almost vertical dive towards the ships. The fun was just about to begin.

# **Chapter 1: Appearing**

Dagur wasn’t the smartest Viking, but he had the courage of a hero and the shrewdness of a skrill. No sooner had we landed, thanks to a perfect flight by Powder, than he was off and charging the nearby captain. Powder was now one year old and had much more experience in warfare. He knew exactly what to do. As all good Dragon Riders figure out, it’s better to take down an attacking ship’s steerage first. While I dealt with two nearby goons, Powder turned his back to mine and sprayed down his enemies with a powerful mist. No sooner had I finished my backslash and knockout; then Powder’s enemies were frozen stiff. With the upper deck won, Dagur grabbed hold of a nearby rope hanging from the sails and swung down with a hair-raising yell while I caught a ride with Powder to the lower deck. The wonderful thing with this boat was that it was loaded down with long-range weapons – typical War Lords being underprepared for one aspect of fighting and over prepared for another - they should have tried harder to shoot us down *before* we arrived at the ship. Thus, it was a simple matter of taking down the rest of the goons. Powder thwacked one in the head with his tail and blasted a few other axe men with another cloud of mist as Dagur vaulted over a bolas cannon, dodged a hammer blow from a goon, and knocked him over board as I disabled another goon with my shield’s bolas launcher and parried a second with my Odin’s Storm – a weapon of my own creation.

“I’ll take the wheel!” Dagur shouted as he started back up the ladder to the second deck. Powder finished off the ship’s last goons, and I got a bearing of the happenings on the other two ships. Sulpher, Snotlout, and Amber (Sulpher’s Deadly Scuttleclaw) were smashing and burning the way down the ship to the left while the one to the right attempted to catch up with ours. Powder had dropped us off on the lead ship, so we only had a few seconds before the third War Lord boat would be surpassing us. I knew that the backup Wing Maidens would be able to catch it eventually if we didn’t step in now, but I figured that Dagur didn’t want to wait that long.

“Hold on!” Dagur shouted, spinning the wheel sharply to the left. Our boat careened to the left and promptly ran into the other ship. There was a sickening crunch; then the air filled with arrows. It turns out that all of the goons on the third ship were the bowmen. Powder hung back as several arrows clanged off his armor.

During the winter, Sulpher, Mom, Dad, and I had worked together to make some armor for Sulpher’s and mine dragons. Now, they were much more formidable. However, arrows were more than capable of piercing armor, so Powder became unsure of whether to charge. Dagur didn’t. He fairly flew off our ship, landed expertly on the neighboring boat, and ran towards the archers who had erected a small crate barricade. I positioned my shield to the side of my Bewilderbeast helmet and followed suit. It was a dangerous move, but my suit of armor was strong, and I figured it would hold. Dagur and I had just about arrived at the stack of crates when Dagur suddenly fell down, and I felt a piercing pain in my left armpit. Unfortunately, every seasoned warrior, most notably the War Lord goons, knows that the armpits of armor are the most vulnerable. I gritted my teeth and vaulted over the stack of crates – launching myself at the nearest archer. The impact and surprising move sent the soldier reeling over the edge of the boat, and I felt another pain as the arrow in my armpit was yanked out during the confusion. Thankfully, I was at the far right of all the other archers so I could face them without worrying about more goons creeping up behind me. I ran forward, swiping at as many of the goons as I could while endeavoring to hold up my now-weak, left arm.

One of the goons hit me over the head with his crossbow, while two others grabbed me by the arms as I flashed by. I knocked the guy to my right out with a well-aimed backslash; then drove my left elbow as best I could into the other goon’s stomach; he keeled over. Suddenly, I felt intense heat and a massive wave of fire blazed down from the sky and consumed many of the other goons: Amber. Before I could shout my thanks, Amber was already whizzing by the end of the boat. The three archers, who were left, leveled their crossbows at me, but froze on the spot as Powder blasted them from behind.

My arm was still hurting and was becoming limp, but I managed to run back around and check on Dagur. He was leaning up against the crates and holding his chest/stomach area where an arrow was embedded in his armor.

“You okay, Uncle?” I asked.

“Yeah, just need to take this arrow out.”

“Wait! Don’t!” I replied hastily, “That’ll just cause you to bleed more. It didn’t puncture any of your organs it looks like, so just keep it in. We’ll get you to the doctor.”

“Hey, what’s wrong with *you*?!” he said, pointing to my now, almost completely limp, arm.

“I need to see the doc too,” I grunted.

I whistled to Powder who was investigating the ship’s hold, quickly boarded him with Dagur, and nudged Powder into the air. As we set off at a rapid pace, a quick glance behind me informed me that Snotlout and Sulpher had also been victorious, and I could see the Wing Maiden ships (our backup) rapidly approaching from the east. Powder made great time back to the island, and he knew just where to go. With skillful maneuvering, Powder zipped between the thick trees higher up on Wing Maiden Island and landed in a small clearing beside a series of tree houses. Sulpher had made a tree house up here all by herself a summer or two ago. When the rest of the village found out about it, they decided to expand it and turned it into their “hospital” of sorts. They figured that keeping the hospital up here, away from the main village, would make it more secure.

No sooner had we landed then two Defenders of the Wing ran up. Defenders of the Wing were the most skilled tribesmen when it came to medical-related emergencies. They were always on call whenever War Lord ships were seen on the horizon.

“Anyone else hurt?” the older Defender of the Wing asked while briefly scanning Dagur.

“Not that I know of,” I replied, “But my arm got shot.”

I lifted my left arm with my right and showed where blood was starting to ooze from my armpit.

“Eh, that’s nothing. These are only minor,” the second replied after a quick glance and as he led us toward one of the on-ground buildings.

“Yeah, no casualties, and it was just us four against all of them,” Dagur added.

The older Defender of the Wing shook his head, “You guys are *way* too impetuous.”

“You have to remember,” the second Defender of the Wing said, “that Berserkers have *always* been that way.”

“That doesn’t mean they can keep on doing that, though!”

The older medic led Dagur into one of the buildings while the other one sat me down in the bigger cabin and carefully removed my chest armor. The wound in my arm turned out to not be nearly as deep as I had originally thought, but he quickly wrapped it up with some of his medicines and a clean cloth. My arm almost immediately felt much better.

“Can I go?” I asked quickly, when he had finished.

“As long as you do NOT use your left arm!” he insisted, “It’s going to take at least a week before it is almost completely healed.”

“Sure, sure,” I said getting up a little too hastily and racing for the door. The doctor shook his head but didn’t restrain me. Outside, Powder was waiting for me and munching on an extremely large salmon that one of the other Defenders of the Wing must have given him.

“C’mon boy,” I told him, “Let’s go check on Sulpher and Snotlout.”

Powder snorted and made a swift flight back to the site of our small battle, the Wing Maiden vessels had reached the battle by that time and were subduing any live War Lord goons. Powder swooped in for a landing on the lead Wing Maiden ship where Sulpher and Snotlout were talking.

“Ouch! What happened to *you*,” Snotlout said, noticing my bandaged arm.

“Just an arrow wound,” I replied nonchalantly, “At least Powder is fine. That armor is sweet!”

“Amber got injured in the head by an arrow,” Sulpher informed me, “But she’ll be fine. She’s with the Defenders of the Wing on that ship.” (As it turned out, we had medic staff *everywhere*)

“The second ship is sinking, Master Snotlout,” the head Wing Maiden informed him, “But the first and third appear to still be in usable condition. Would you like us to bring them back with us?”

“Absolutely, we’ll have a full-on armada soon enough!” Snotlout declared – probably thinking of the other War Lord boats we had captured in the past six months. Ever since a terrific clash of warriors and War Lord goons on Berserker Island, my tribes of the Berserkers and Defenders of the Wing had temporarily moved in with the Wing Maidens led by Atali, Minden, and Snotlout. Unfortunately, our island’s volcano had been awakened by the fighting of two groups of warring Dragon riders using hybrids and the War Lord goons after our mass exodus. Thus, it looked like our stay was going to be longer than just “temporarily.” At first I was not excited about this move, but eventually I realized it allowed me to spend more time with my girlfriend, Sulpher, who was a Wing Maiden herself and daughter of Minden and Snotlout Jorgenson. I happened to be the son of Fishlegs and Heather Ingerman, and nephew to Dagur and Mala.

“Have you questioned our prisoners about what they were doing here?” Sulpher asked the head Wing Maiden.

“We have,” she replied, “but they just said they were doing reconnaissance.”

“Makes sense,” I shrugged, “they don’t have a lot of reasons to want to attack us except for our dragons and prisoners, but with so many of us warriors – they’d be crazy to do so.”

“Well, they’ve done it before,” Snotlout reminded me, “so we can’t rule that out.”

Snotlout turned to the Wing Maiden general and added, “Put up a double watch for the next two weeks. We can’t be too careful.”

“Yes, Master Snotlout,” she conceded.

“Well, I want to change out of this heavy armor,” Sulpher told me, “Let’s go back to my house.”

Snotlout was already off to investigate the “booty” from our captured ships, so Sulpher and I decided to take Powder back to Wing Maiden Island. After all the coming and going, I was thinking that Powder did not need any exercise today.

“Sure,” I replied, “Then I need to go grab my armor from the medic center and fortify up the arm areas more.”

“Oh, and Mom said she wanted us to referee some of the senior duels today,” Sulpher informed me.

“Oh Thor!” I exclaimed as I helped Sulpher onto Powder’s back, “It’s already that time of year?! It seems like just yesterday that I graduated from Warrior Training Camp!”

Sulpher chuckled, “Yep!”

Warrior Training Camp was where all the young warriors of our newly combined tribes trained to be in our forces. My two tribes used to send their graduating “seniors'' through Bewilderbeast Mountain as a final challenge. Those that failed could still graduate but would enter our forces as average soldiers. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately), Wing Maiden Island did not have a Bewilderbeast Mountain with hundreds of small caves and tunnels, so Snotlout and Dagur had come up with a new idea. Using our ever growing number of War Lord goon prisoners, they decided to create duels involving a senior versus a War Lord goon. The tougher the War Lord goon they defeated, the higher the rank they would graduate to. On our days off, various members of our more elite forces would battle each War Lord goon and determine their difficulty rating. Unfortunately for some of the War Lord goons, the seniors proved to be too…er…strong. However, there were other times when the War Lord goon would be too strong for the senior – hence why seasoned warriors like Sulpher and I (though we were by far the youngest seasoned warriors) were helpful to have in the fight dome. Our main foot army was always out practicing maneuvers and the like while other sections of our forces did their own practicing. Sulpher and I were exceptions. We were allowed to pretty much roam the island. As the only people on our island to have dragons, it was our job to keep an eye out for War Lord goons beyond the vision of the island scounts and keep ourselves and our dragons in shape in case of an attack.

Meanwhile, Powder had reached Wing Maiden Island for the second time in just a few hours – amazingly, he wasn’t even really breathing heavy; what with him being an exceptionally tough dragon – as hybrids had to be.

We alighted in the village near the main hall.

“How was it?” Dad called out to me as he and Mom exited the main hall.

“Dagur got shot in the chest, Amber got shot in the head, and Kai was nailed in the arm, but they are all fairly minor,” Sulpher spoke out.

Dad looked disapprovingly at the cloth wrapped tightly around my left arm but did not say anything.

“You can bet that my brother is going to turn his injury into some over-blown story about his bravery!” Mom chuckled.

I laughed too. “Yeah, but Powder and Amber were *beasts* out there!”

“I bet!” Dad replied, “They’re turning out to be really amazing dragons!”

“We’ll see you both later!” Sulpher said to my parents as she pulled me along, “We have to get to the Senior Duels!”

“Already?” Dad said to Mom.

I didn’t get to hear the answer because Sulpher was already dragging me down the street. She was always more impetuous than I and excited to go head first into danger. I preferred exploring new lands and learning about dragons, but I also happened to have the abilities of my mom, uncle, and aunt, which meant I was a favorite, go-to warrior.

Sulpher’s parents, Snotlout and Minden, were active leaders of the Wing Maidens as I said before, and were normally always gone, but, for some reason, the door of Sulpher’s house was still open.

“That’s a little strange,” Sulpher admitted as we peeked inside.

“I’ll go in first,” I told her.

“NO! I’ll go first – you’re wounded,” she insisted – pushing me out of the way. Powder hung outside; he had found something interesting to sniff in the bushes.

I let Sulpher go in first; then followed. No sooner had we done this, than the door slammed shut behind us and revealed a stranger. Sulpher and I immediately went into defensive postures and yanked out our weapons (Sulpher always used a large metal hammer, and I used an Odin’s Storm) from our backs.

“I’m not here to fight,” the man said, holding up his hands, “We just need you Kaizar.”

It just so happened to be the mystery man from a few months prior. He had shown up on Wing Maiden Island, asked for my help, and then disappeared again (after I refused).

“You told me that last time,” I answered, remembering my last meeting with him. The stranger was dressed completely in black and had a deep voice.

“We’ve waited long enough. If you don’t help, something bad *will* happen,” he replied.

“What? Stop being cryptic,” Sulpher commanded.

The man sighed and asked, “Have you ever heard of a Bewilderbeast?”

“Yeah…” I answered.

“And have you heard of the Red Death?”

“Well yeah…” Sulpher answered, “Who hasn’t heard of those stories?!”

“Well, what would happen if you had a hybrid of those two?” the man questioned.

“Oh,” Sulpher and I both replied at once.

“We need your dragon-training skills,” he told me.

“I’m not the best guy for *that* job,” I told him, “Hiccup and his crew are MUCH better.”

“I know, but it’s also a dangerous job, and you’re a lot more resourceful than the others.”

“How do I know you’re not lying?” I asked, eyes narrowing.

“See for yourself,” the man shrugged, “Go to Auction Island and to Vander’s Tavern. Ask the bartender for ‘something crunchy on the outside and chewy in the middle.’”

“Okay?” I answered; then pointed at Sulpher, “But I’m at least bringing her and our dragons.”

“Sure,” the guy answered, “But no more, we don’t want to spook the lizard.”

“Where did you guys even get it?” I asked suspiciously.

“Argh! Stop asking questions!” the guy spoke, “We need action, not questions.”

I thought about this, but kept quiet.

“You guys can take your dragons, but I’ll have to use my boat, so it’ll be awhile before I can get back. My contact on Auction Island will be able to help.”

“Fine,” I finally replied, “But you’re going to have to wait at least two days for us to prepare.”

“Have it your way,” the man replied, “But make it snappy.”

With that, the guy exited the house.

“What is he up to?” Sulpher asked

“I have no idea, but I don’t think it’s going to be good either way,” I answered.

Suddenly, from outside, there was a loud shout and a pounding of feet.

“Uh oh,” Sulpher groaned, throwing open the door. We both rushed out and promptly ran into a group of Berserkers sprinting at full speed past the house.

“Out of the way!” the closest Berserker shouted in my face, “We’re on the chase of a spy!”

They quickly tore down the street after our mysterious man who was trying to evade an ever-expanding team of pursuers.

“POWDER!” I yelled out to my Dreadstrider. Powder quickly ran out from among the nearby brush and stood at attention. I hopped on his back and offered my hand to Sulpher.

“Let’s go watch the action!” I suggested to her.

Powder darted down the street, easily flashing by the majority of the pursuers and reaching the mysterious stranger just as he ducked under a dozen blades but was tackled by a few other Wing Maidens.

“Let me go, idiots!” he screamed at his assailants, struggling wildly and almost succeeding in slipping away again.

“Hold it!” Sulpher told the others, hopping off Powder, “Let him go, he’s not a spy.”

“How do you know that,” a Berserker captain challenged her, “He looks the type!”

“Well-,” I began, but was cut off as the stranger yanked free of his captors and b-lined for the forest nearby.

“Oof!” Almost instantaneously, he was squashed beneath the most massive body of all – Dad.

“Looks like I was just in time!” Dad declared as the stranger wheezed beneath him.

“Dad,” I whined, “He’s *not* a spy. He wants my help with some dragon training.”

Dad’s eyes narrowed, “What kind of training?”

“Let’s find out!” Mom declared emerging from the crowd of Berserkers and Wing Maidens. Before I could say, “Stop!” Mom had walked over to the stranger and whipped off his mask. Unfortunately, the face was not familiar to me – neither was it to anyone else.

“Are you happy now?” the man grunted as Dad got off him, “None of you recognize me! I’m not a threat!”

“Who’s to say you’re not a War Lord goon?” a Wing Maiden challenged.

“Because War Lord goons don’t go on solo missions!” the man insisted.

“What’s your name?” I asked him, squeezing my way through the crowd to my parents.

“You still wouldn’t recognize it,” the man replied.

“Spit it out!” Mom replied intensely – I guess she wasn’t happy about this guy creeping around our village. To be fair, I was oftentimes more trusting than I should be.

“Liggo,” he answered, “Liggo Grimborn.”

“I thought I recognized the voice,” Mom declared shoving her axe nearer Liggo’s throat, “You’re a son of Viggo!”

“Oooohhhhh,” the crowd of warriors murmured. They all knew who *Viggo* was.

“What are you doing here?” Mom wanted to know next.

“Let him explain,” Liggo shrugged, pointing to me.

“YOU?” Mom bellowed, looking me straight in the eyes, “What *have* you been doing with this guy?!”

“We’ve been *talking*,” I mumbled, “Supposedly there’s something that he needs my help with?”

“What?” the Berserker captain replied sarcastically, “Tell us!”

“I’m sorry,” I answered, “I can’t – for fear of causing widespread panic.”

“What?!” the captain spat, “Panic?! We eat panic for breakfast here!”

“Not this kind,” Sulpher replied snarkily.

The captain’s face turned purple, and he started to say something else, but Mom cut him off.

“We’ll talk about this later,” she commanded, “Right now, I want you guys (she pointed at the ever increasing crowd of on-looking warriors and villagers), to take Liggo to a cell. And you two (she said pointing at Sulpher and I) are late for the Warrior Training Camp duels!”

Sulpher mumbled something under her breath, and I rolled my eyes.

“On my way Mom,” I groaned. It didn’t take us long to run back down the street and reach the three warrior training domes (so called this because they were large, round concrete arenas with a chain mesh over the top). I randomly chose to monitor the second arena, and Sulpher decided to take the third (the first being full of weight training equipment at the moment). My arm was obviously out of commission, so I brought Powder along to help me. Klagur (the main instructor) was already there with two assistants and waiting impatiently.

“Finally!” Klagur bellowed, “Took you long enough! I have half a mind to put you back in our program!”

“Sorry,” I answered, “I hurt my arm while battling a dozen War Lord goons and got waylaid by Viggo Grimborn’s son.”

Klagur’s assistants’ eyes got wide, but Klagur just grunted, “Get down there – a little wound won’t stop you, huh?”

I ignored his comment and entered through the wide concrete gateway into the dome. On either side of the arena were opposite-facing doors in which a War Lord goon and trainee would enter.

“Cchhhhing!” the heavy metal gate closed behind Powder and I, and the other, two, smaller doors opened. To my right, emerged the trainee. I recognized him, but I didn’t know his name or anything. He appeared to be a fairly experienced fighter. To my left then emerged a War Lord goon armed with a club, who, though bigger than his opponent, appeared a little too old. The duel wasn’t quick though. The trainee did not seem to realize his strength of speed as opposed to the goon and went for a typical attack style which the goon met easily. There was some initial clashing; then they withdrew to catch their breaths. Powder yawned and plopped onto the ground.

With a sudden, hair-raising yell, the goon whipped his club through the air and towards… Powder! This sudden move surprised me greatly. It was obvious that we were *not* his opponents, and we were standing much farther away than the trainee. Fortunately for him, I was not prepared to deal with an attack. Unfortunately for him, Powder was *always* ready. Powder deftly caught the club in his mouth and swung it back - eliciting a a gasp or two from observers in the stands up above the dome. The goon was obviously more surprised by this than I had been initially and dove out of the way - barely. Unfortunately, he was so distracted that he completely missed another flying weapon – an axe. It clocked him in the helmet and laid him out cold before he had even reached the ground.

“Well done!” Klagur announced from up above, “Using distractions to get the advantage. Also, nice aim with your axe.”

The trainee smiled proudly and nodded to me. He quickly picked up his axe and swaggered out of the ring while Klagur’s assistants dragged out the unconscious War Lord goon.

“Good work!” I told Powder, patting him on the head. Powder yawned again and flopped on the ground.

The next contestant was an older girl who was up against a tougher looking goon. This goon was younger and more muscular than the previous goon. Thus, he used his advantage of strength to hack at the girl with heavier strokes. The girl dodged them and ran about trying to get cuts in. Unfortunately, she was unable to really get any devastating attacks in, and the goon was relentless with his swings. Eventually, he managed to meet her sword and shove her to the ground. He quickly saw his chance and went for the kill (even though all test-goons were explicitly told NOT to finish off their opponents). Unfortunately, a pair of bolas shot through the air and trussed him up tighter than a boar used for the annual Snoggletog dinners. For extra measure and probably because he was bored, Powder blasted him with Dreadstrider mist.

“Get a hold of yourself!” Klagur bellowed from above to the girl, “You have to use your *advantages* to take him out. You can’t be scared of your opponent!”

The girl slowly got to her feet and wiped sweat off her forehead.

“Watch *this*!” Klagur yelled at the girl again, pulling on a lever next to him. The lever, as it turned out, opened the door that the goons came out of. The door swung open and six goons poured out – armed with two weapons a piece and wanting blood. I smiled – obviously Klagur wanted to watch me take out my opponents one-handed – though I figured that he might also want the girl to learn a lesson or two off me.

I slipped my shield over my injured arm and yanked my Odin’s Storm out with my right arm. I patted Powder on the head to let him know I would be okay; then I attacked.

I quickly sized up my opponents in the few seconds it took them to reach me and aimed for their weak link – a clumsier goon to the far right. I jumped into the air and smashed his head with the broadside of my Odin’s storm while bashing another goon’s helmet with my shield. Both goons were dazed, but managed to keep standing. However, I followed the initial attack up with another swipe with my Odin’s Storm and sliced right through the backs of their helmets.

“Look at that! He saw their weak point!” Klagur pointed out.

After that, I ducked beneath the next two goons and performed an exquisite Berserker blade yank on the third. The bludgeon was pulled right out of his hand and slammed right into the fourth goon’s chest – bowling him over. With a quick bob-and-weave, I then chopped at the other goons and waylaid them with shield smashes.

“Excellent form!” Klagur declared, “Note how he carried his weapon!”

The last two goons tried to hit me from my right and left, but I ducked out of the way, and the one goon totally crushed his comrade – giving me ample time to swing around and knock him out from behind. Then, Powder blasted them all for extra measure, again…

Klagur guffawed loudly and told his assistants to clean up for the next trainees – the girl dejectedly walked out of the ring.

The rest of the sessions ended more or less in the trainees’ favor, and by the time the sun set, I found myself helping Klagur close up the dome.

“Well, we’re going to have a large graduating class this year,” Klagur mentioned.

“Good, we can use as many new warriors as we can get. The War Lord goons are a whole lot of trouble,” I answered, “We also need more warriors who are experienced with boats.”

“Yeah, it’s unfortunate that we’re forgetting all that now,” Klagur lamented, “When I was young, we practically lived on the sea!”

“What about dragons?” I asked, “Didn’t you guys use dragons?”

“Oh, well, that too, but I wasn’t the biggest fan of dragons,” Klagur answered, “I mean, I don’t have anything against them, but they’re so… they’re just dangerous.”

“Elaborate,” I told Klagur.

“Well, I don’t know. They just have so much potential to cause mass chaos, you know?”

“I guess,” I replied slowly, “but they’re so helpful.”

“Yeah, I see that,” Klagar admitted, “Without Powder and Slizer and your friends’ dragons, we’d have been in lots of trouble several times over, but it just so happens that dragons are too often used for bad, and that’s *not* good.”

“I see,” I replied, “Eventually, dragons won’t be around anymore. We’re just dealing with a few last ones anyway. After all, hybrids can’t have children.”

“Good thing!” Klagur said, locking the large, iron door behind him and starting off down the dirt path..

“But Lemmirg has Deathgrippers, and they *can* have children,” I reminded Klagur as I trailed behind.

“True, we need to separate those Deathgrippers from him!” Klagur grunted.

“It seems like we could just do a sting mission and nab the deathgrippers,” I pondered out loud.

“Maybe… But that would require some pretty specific intel on Scout Island’s workings, and we don’t have that,” Klagur commented.

“But we could get it,” I replied.

“But who’d be willing to go undercover there!” Klagur replied indignantly, “That’d almost be suicide!”

“We’ll see about that,” I smirked.

Klagur looked sideways at me but didn’t say anything.

By this time, we had arrived at the main hall and entered to find the place crowded with others eating dinner.

“Man is it crowded in here!” Klagur groaned – trying to squeeze past a few people walking by with heaping bowls of stew.

“Could be worse!” I asserted, “I’ll see you later!”

Klagur nodded in response and veered to the right to go find his family, while I made my way to the back of the hall where *my* family was.

“It’s weird why he went after Kaizar,” Dagur was saying with a mouth full of food as he talked to my parents.

Across the table, Mala added her two cents, “I think he wants to get Kaizar alone to take him out!”

“I don’t think that’s right,” I interrupted, “He had plenty of time alone with me those few months back, and he didn’t seem that violent. I think he really is up to *something*, but I don’t think it’s taking me out. He isn’t a War Lord goon.”

“But his father!” Mom reminded us all, “Was a back-stabbing crook!”

“Yeah, but he also saved Hiccup too,” Dad reminded her.

Mom grumbled something and dug into her soup.

“Perhaps we should just let Kaizar go with him while the rest of us track them and provide backup,” Dagur suggested.

“He’s bound to see through that, though,” Dad argued, “After all, it took us a while to catch him. Who knows how long he has been crawling around our island!”

“So much for our guards,” Mom mumbled.

“Reminds me of you when you came to Berk,” Dad told Mom, “We had no idea you were up to anything, but you always seemed to be around – trying to pry us for information.”

“Only because my step-parents were captured!” Mom quickly replied, “And you had no clue that I was trying to find the book of dragons!”

“Sneaky Heather – that’s my sister!” Dagur declared.

“I wouldn’t have, if I hadn't thought that was the only option!” Mom insisted.

“But we trusted you!” Dad argued.

I could see that this was not going to get anyway. It was sort of a sore spot in my parents’ memories. Just about then, Sulpher got up from her table where her family were talking and squished in beside me.

“They’re talking about Heather’s first time at Berk?” Sulpher quickly surmised.

“Yeah,” I replied, “Just when we were starting to get somewhere in our conversation about Liggo!”

“Weird stuff!” Sulpher admitted, “My parents are talking about taking a trip to Outcast Island, and they’re all fighting over how many ships to bring and how many people should go and stay and all that. BORING!”

I chuckled, “Well, we’ll have all the excitement we need if we end up going to Auction Island!”

“It’ll be a lot more fun than working on those zip lines all day!” Sulpher groaned.

“I hope that we’ll be able to see the rest of MDR too this summer,” I told Sulpher, “We always have a blast!”

“Puff and Nuff are a hoot!” Sulpher exclaimed.

“Yeah, I think we should go to Auction Island anyway. Something tells me that Liggo isn’t lying, and if there really is a hybrid Red Death and Bewilderbeast, we need to be there to provide damage control!”

“Yeah, makes sense, but it just seems unlikely. I mean those dragons were rare in the prime of dragon civilization. The chance that Liggo would have a hybrid egg in this day and age seems way too improbable!”

I shrugged, “Who knows.”

“By the way,” Sulpher told me, “Powder’s over with Amber in the dragon infirmary.”

I nodded my head, “Okay.”

“Those two almost get along as well as you and I!” Sulpher said, batting her eyes just a little.

I elbowed her and said, “Yeah, but I’m way more handsome than Powder!”

“The same could be said about me according to Amber!” Sulpher laughed.

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that!” I smirked.

Sulpher groaned and punched me in the side; then leaned her head on my shoulder.

I quickly glanced over at my parents who were still deep in an argument with Dagur and Mala. Sulpher had only officially become my girlfriend about six months ago, but we had known each other for just a little longer than Powder was alive. Sulpher had fairly long brain hair and beautiful green eyes as well as a very athletic body and quick battle-sense. Actually, it was her that first showed interest in me, but, due to some unforeseen circumstances in which we spent a lot of time together, I had grown to like her too. Now, we spent most of our daylight hours together. A lot of which was maintaining the zip lines wires that led from the hospital to a clearing of forest near the village. Neither of our parents had been terribly excited to learn about our budding relationship, but, upon seeing how “awesome” Sulpher was (or at least I hope that was what they thought…), they had gotten accustomed to it.

“You think we should start packing a few things for our trip in a few days?” I asked Sulpher, “Assuming our parents let us?”

“Yeah, probably,” Sulpher murmured.

“In which case, we should just let Liggo go and track him!” Dagur announced loudly, “As I had said *before*!”

“Fine,” Mom conceded, “We’ll let Kaizar and Sulpher go the day after tomorrow. Hopefully, Amber and Kaizar will be healed by that time, and they can beat him to Auction Island.”

“In that case,” Mala added, “You had better get to bed, Kaizar.”

“Sure,” I replied, “Make sure to keep an eye on Powder.”

“Don’t worry, he’ll be fine,” Mala assured me.

By this time, about half of the hall had emptied out as everyone disbursed to get home and some sleep. All of our tribes were very rigid about our sleep schedules – as Snotlout said, “A rested body makes a fierce body.”

“Well, time to get up,” I said, pushing Sulpher off the wooden bench and standing up. Sulpher was surprised and pitched off the bench and onto the floor.

“Hey!” Sulpher announced, she grabbed me by the arm and swung me around and into a support pillar. I narrowly dodged the beam, and yanked back on Sulpher – pulling her through the air. However, she caught a nearby, ornate shield on the wall and swung her feet out at me. She smacked me right in the stomach – bowling me over, but I managed to grip her feet and start dragging her away from the table.

“Hey!” she laughed again, “Let me go!”

“I don’t know about that,” I reasoned, “You’ve been a *very* naughty girl!”

“Oh come on!” Sulpher giggled.

Suddenly, I was grabbed from behind with an iron grasp and my breath was practically squeezed out of me.

“Is this guy bothering you?” Snotlout asked Sulpher as I lost my grip on her feet. Sulpher jumped back up.

“Just a little!” Sulpher smirked.

“Well, what should I do with him?” Snotlout wanted to know.

“Seems like there’s really only one thing *to* do,” Sulpher replied, grinning.

“What would that be?” Snotlout teased back.

“This,” Sulpher said. She then proceeded to lean in and kiss me.

“Oooh,” Snotlout said, “Uh...”

At this, Mom’s face reddened, and Dagur slapped her on the back – laughing.

“Do you do this to all your captives?” I asked Sulpher.

“Nope, just you,” Sulpher giggled as Snotlout let me go in a hurry.