

Chapter One

“Katrina! You need to wake up! It’s a school day! You need to learn! Come on sis, Mom is making bacon and I’ll eat all of yours if you don’t hurry!” My brother’s squeaky, annoying voice drifted through my hazy dreams of evil bunnies trying to eat my toes. It must’ve been that sour milk that I had before I went to bed last night.

“Shut up brat face, I’ll wake up when I feel like it!” I growled, eyes still shut. Bacon did sound good though. I slowly sat up and wiped my eyes. I blindly reached over to my dresser and pulled out some random clothes. As I slipped them on, I looked around my room. The walls were painted pale pink from when I was little, a color that I wanted to change. A gray desk and a dresser were crammed in one side of my small room, while my gray bed was in the other side of my room. The color combination was odd, but I didn’t really care.

I looked in the mirror through bleary eyes and saw one sleepy girl. My black hair goes about halfway down my torso, so I normally tie it up in a ponytail because it drives me crazy when it gets in my face. I have dark brown, almost black eyes that starkly contrast with my pale skin. I wear dark clothes since it seems to suit me best.

I practically fell down the stairs since I hadn’t really woken up yet. I plopped down at an empty seat at the table and started munching on the bacon sitting in front of me. As the sleep got out of my eyes, I looked around blearily. Our small kitchen was decorated in pressed flowers that Mom and I collected in the spring several years ago. We had a few old pieces of china in a tiny china cabinet, but not much. The linoleum was a cream color that looked weird if it got dirty, so Mom tried to polish it often, and the walls were a white color with weird pink stripes.

My brother, Daniel, was sitting next to me. His hair was lighter. More of a brown color, but his eyes and skin were still like mine. He was younger than me and was pretty tolerable for a little brother. He was happily eating his breakfast.

Mom was standing by the wall, watching us. She must’ve already eaten. Her hair was wavy and an auburn color, a bit like Daniel, and green-grey eyes. She was small, pretty thin, and

a bit jittery.

Mom seemed restless and kept looking at the calendar. She rubbed her hands together and seemed uncomfortable. It took me a second to realize that something was up. I saw the calendar and froze. I slowly set down the piece of bacon I was holding and stared. Today was March 17th, exactly 10 years ago, my Dad disappeared. All tiredness forgotten, I glanced at my mom. She looked happy and was smiling, but the smile didn't reach her eyes. I looked at Daniel, my little brother, he hadn't noticed yet. He just kept munching his bacon, and his eyes were fixed on the plate

I looked at the clock: it was another hour till school and I didn't want Daniel to drive Mom crazy today. "Hey Mom, do you want Daniel and I to go to the store? We need milk and stuff," I said casually, hoping Daniel wouldn't object. He looked angry at me. He probably didn't want to be stuck with his older sister for the entire morning. Mom looked flustered at the idea then realized what I was talking about.

"Yes of course sweetie! Here is the list and some money." She stumbled and when I looked at her hands, she was shaking. Daniel opened his mouth to argue but I silenced him with a glare. He stuck his tongue out at me then ran into his room and came out with a sweater and a book. Mom scratched out the shopping list while I grabbed my sweater.

I tied my sweater around my waist, grabbed my little brother's hand, and practically dragged him out the door. His hand yanked out of mine as soon as we walked out the door. I looked back at the squat, bland place that was my home and sighed. We lived on the poor side of town because Mom could never get a high enough paying job.

We walked down the sidewalk in silence. Daniel wasn't saying anything but he kept scanning the skies looking around. We only lived a few blocks from the store so it was a short walk. I was all relaxed until I heard the rustling of wings above me. Instinct took over and I doubled over and panicked. It was right above me! I was TRAPPED! I couldn't escape! It could just swoop right down and eat me. It was going to get me! Daniel saw me stop, then looked up and laughed.

"It's fine Katrina! It's just Mr. Riley's dragon." He was gesturing at the dragon perches above my head, who was three times my size. After I noticed that I wasn't breathing, My

breathing was panicked and scurried over to Daniel.

Daniel kept laughing, "I can't believe that you are still scared of Dragons after all this time! When was the last time you even touched one?"

"You know why I don't like Dragons. I have a perfectly good reason not to. I just don't like them if I don't know them well." I gasped out.

"Yeah right, you've known his dragon all your life. Hey Jasper, tell Mr. Riley I said hi." Daniel waved at the dragon, which nodded and flew off. We kept walking down the road, and I was still panting from shock as we walked into the store. I looked at the shopping list and read: milk, butter, Little O's, and bread. I walked from shelf to shelf getting the stuff on the list. I stalled because I didn't want us to be around Mom too much before we went to school.

School started at 10 o'clock so people could do all of their chores before they had to come to school. I glanced at the clock at the back of the small store; 9:30. Just enough time to drop off the stuff at home and head to school. I went to the small checkout counter and smiled at the cashier as I put the stuff on the counter. I pulled the money out of my pocket and gave it to the cashier as Daniel wandered toward me. I knew that he wanted some of the candy but he also knew that we couldn't afford it. I got the change and handed the bag with our stuff over to Daniel.

As we walked out of the store Daniel looked over to me. "Do you ever think what it would be like now if he was here?"

Shocked, I looked over at him. Then I looked at my feet as I walked. "Yes." I whispered. We kept walking in silence for the rest of the way to the house. I ran inside and put the stuff away. Mom must be in the backyard in the garden. I went back out and we walked to the school.

We got to the school and I turned to Daniel. "Yes, all the time..." I hugged him and we stood there for a while. As we split up to go the different classes I tousled his hair and smiled at him. Daniel didn't remember our Dad, he was only a few months old when dad disappeared, presumed dead. Mom didn't like to talk about Dad much, so Daniel didn't know much about him.

After that, we split up for our different classes. Since I am 15 I'm in Advanced 2nd and Daniel, being almost 11 is in Beginner 4th. As I walked toward my class, I heard a familiar voice.

"Katrina! Wait up! Jeez you walk fast, WAAAAIT!" I stopped as Zaid ran up beside me.

“Why do you have to walk so fast? It’s not like we’re late or anything.” Zaid is about two inches taller than me and has the same dark hair and eyes with pale skin. He isn’t related to me, it’s just the way we all look out here.

“I like to walk fast, you’re just too slow. What’s the matter anyway?” I asked as I started walking fast again.

“Oh come on, slow down! Well um, I just figured that I should warn you that we’re going to the nursery for a field trip today.” He wheezed as he tried to catch up.

I stopped dead in my tracks. I barely noticed Zaid’s protest as he almost tripped over me. We’re going to the NURSERY? Oh crud, I hate these stupid field trips! This wasn’t I don’t like dragons all that much; in fact, I don’t like them at all.

“Uh, Katrina sorry but now you do need to walk fast; we’re going to be late!” I snapped back to the present to realize that Zaid was practically dragging me to the classroom.

I shook his hand loose and started running toward the classroom, the hall monitor didn’t notice us. Since she was talking to her boyfriend, she didn’t seem to realize that we were running until we went around the corner. I am a faster runner than Zaid, so I pulled ahead of him, and made it to the classroom a good five seconds ahead of him. We both took a few deep breathes and walked into the classroom and slipped into our desks right as the bell rang.

Ms. Filler bounced into the room as the bell rang and said “Hello class!” in a singsong voice and got a few grunts as a response.

Ms. Filler was new to this town, she had big curly blond hair and bright blue eyes, she had moved here the first part of this Semester with a bunch of families from the West. She was way too bouncy for a bunch of teenagers. I looked around the classroom and saw the usual mix of dark hair, dark eyed face down on desk snoring teenagers. We had a few blondes like Ms. Filler. Some were shy and timid, but most were condescending jerks.

“Ok class! We’re going to the NURSERY today so pack up your bags and go to bus 12 in five minutes!” Ms. Filler sang and danced out of the classroom.

Ugh. The local kids went to the nursery all the time, so there was mostly groaning from them. The people who weren’t born here were either excited to go, or terrified; Like me. Which,

you know, would've been normal if I was a new here, but I wasn't.

As I pulled my bag on my shoulders, Zaid walked over to me. "Are you going to be ok?"

"Oh sure, why wouldn't I be, since we are going to the *nursery*? I mean, really, I not only hate being anywhere near dragons, I'm going to go to a place that is full of dragons, why wouldn't I be okay?" I sarcastically reply.

Zaid rolled his eyes at me and pulled a piece of raw meat out of his pack. "Mom thinks that I'll get my first dragon today, since we don't have one in the house anymore..." He looked at the ground.

Zaid lost his Dad the same time that I lost my Dad. We presumed that they were connected since our families are close. We could never find any evidence except that they both took their dragons, all their gear and disappeared, leaving nothing behind but their family. Most families rely on their dragons for catching food, transportation, and many other things. Since our Fathers took all of the dragons when they left, we had a hard time.

I remember Dad's dragons, they were Gyro and Hitle. I had liked them, I wasn't scared of Dragons then. Gyro and Hitle were very friendly and always took me on flights, but now they're gone too.

I sighed and started walking toward the buses "Come on, let's go Zaid."

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