

LONDON 1910

Within the hallowed halls of the Academy Scientifica-Lucidus lay the night's quiet, as the great thinkers and doers of the civilized world slept and dreamed. Their imaginations fired away, in spite of sleep, formulating with ephemeral machines—and only Figment worked on, without its sway.

Imagination and inspiration incarnate, the small purple dragon rushed around, bolting from bookshelf to table to doorway and back, ever in-transit. Clinks and clanks came and went, punctuated by the flap-flap of scroll and tome pages, as he darted by and by, throwing the candlelight into a dance. The windows of that particular laboratory bore the only light across the entirety of the property, a single eye unclosed. Naturally, at such an hour, no one would have noticed it—and any who may would have thought nothing of it. After all, it may have been the great inventor Blarion Mercurial's lab, but it was Figment's *home*.

"Alright," Figment sighed, setting a fifth wrench down, and eyeing his handiwork with a biased glee. The modest-sized machine managed to dwarf all three feet of the purple dragon, including his orange horns and comparatively small wings. But then, up, down or straight-on, he'd have gazed at it, all the same. "Hee! I do think it's ready! Run out of excuses to fuss further. Blarion won't believe it!"

Even in the dim, the machine gleamed and sparkled, polished to from *shiny* to *unreasonable* by the overeager dragon. Figment's tail, which had settled still in kind of a relieved sigh, began to twitch and stir, unable to restrain itself, just as his smile snuck in.

"Though, he rightly *will* want to make sure it works," he hummed, at length, narrowing his yellow eyes the way his creator often did, whilst musing. It felt right.

The countless days and endless nights of toiling, planning, collating, failing, regrouping—all of it had been building towards this moment, the moment that pure thought energy would enter the world stage, and alter it forever; to begin with, that stage wouldn't need lighting! What a thought!

Perhaps, *maybe*, he might have been better off waiting until the dawn, until Mercurial returned to finish out the last phase of the project—but Figment was part inspiration, and nobody had invented anything to make inspiration wait around, nor should they. Too many thoughts crowded his fevered dragon-brain, to the point where Figment took a deep breath, his violet-pink belly scales puffing out slightly. He held it, as constant training told him to, and then calmly let it go.

"Goodness, yes, ideas and ideas," he chuckled, rubbing up at his horns thoughtfully. "What to...ah, right, yes! Fuel! I do think a bit of a reward is in order..."

He remained just short enough to have to mount a few thick books, to scale a wooden chair, to properly reach a large leather satchel, which he brought back over to the machine. He opened the top flap wide, showing off the dozens of small orbs inside to the machine, as if it understood.

"We fed the mind, we did! Now, the stomach, heh!"

He happily took a small candy from within, and popped it into his maw, speaking through it:

"Nuwf, t'tmm i' ohn!"

He leapt up to and clutched an unwieldy lever attached to the machine, and let his body weight gradually creep it down, down, until gravity did the rest; a wad of sparks sprayed loose as the lever *thunked* down, knocking Figment off and onto the floor, as the machine whirred and rattled and shook to life before him.

"Haha! If whkth!"

Here, the inventor's beloved companion would truly shine! Here, a new form of energy would be everyone's, and the future would be *theirs*! Surely, such an accomplishment would cancel out any possibility of Blarion *perhaps* being somewhat cross at his impetuosity. There was simply no way he could stay in trouble, should he have been courting trouble in the first place—which he was. It was all a matter of degrees, and how many degrees it would take to burn him had yet to be seen.

The opening in the machine's framework gave way to a glowing disc of energy, a sort of vertical whirlpool, which coalesced in waves into a widening disc; Figment gawked freely, the candy hanging in his toothy little jaw, delighting in what could only be victory of the highest order.

"Oho! It works! It really, truly...er..."

His *eureka* moment fell short, usurped by the dawning fact that the energy disc was still widening, well beyond the machine's planned parameters. He nearly choked on the candy as he gulped, backing away in a sudden fit of dread—only to feel himself jerked forth, beckoned into the disc's yawning maw like some slack-witted prey to slaughter.

Goodness. This was...unforeseen.

Figment's little hands clutched the satchel tight, cutting it off at the neck, just as the suggestion forward became a command. His form had nothing to bargain with, as the widening disc's pull yanked him closer, then closer still, in messy starts. His wings were beating without permission, yet to no avail; before Figment could so much as yelp for assistance he knew wouldn't come, he was off his feet and spiraling headlong into the energy, passing clear through it, and vanishing outright.

Instantly after, the portal vanished as well, leaving a few windswept pages looping about in the air, before falling to the laboratory floor. Only the candle stood witness, and it burned calmly on, uninterrupted, through the remainder of the night.

1.

Dawn's light crept over the stilled hills and stonework, grass whispering about in the breeze. The Artisans realm found itself in a deep peace and quiet, yet its greatest protector stubbornly scoured and surveyed for anything wrong, anything at all. Truth be told, anything at all would have been...kind of welcome.

"Geez," Spyro huffed, the dragon flapping his wings here and there, otherwise gliding on the winds. "Not so much as a single Gnorc acting up...I know peace and quiet are good, and bad is bad...but a *little bit* of bad to deal with wouldn't be so bad."

The hard-won prosperity of the Dragons' realm had set the purple creature for life, in terms of heroism; the downside was, adventure was part of his being, and he was fresh out. The crisis of peace was a final opponent, unseen, and Spyro was losing badly to it.

"Guess I can patrol the portals for any signs of...*signs*."

A considerably smaller yellow light trailed alongside, property of a tiny golden firefly: his faithful companion, Sparx. The small glimmer-glow darted about, silent but vigilant, trailing closely as the dragon banked a hard left, tucking and darting into a landing atop a hill. By the time Sparx caught up, Spyro was already circling around a mighty stone arc, a portal; the jewel at its apex faded back down to its normal luster—which, naturally, meant that it had just fired up, moments earlier.

"Huh. Just got used. But, I don't see anyone," Spyro murmured, squinting, scanning the hillside for signs of life. "Portals don't just activate themselves. So, who came through here? Do you see anybody, Sparx?"

The firefly-light shook 'no', and Spyro squinted harder, circling about in place as he checked the periphery again; halfway around, he gasped, nearly bumping into the bug as he stumbled back in shock. The cry caught in his throat as he blinked, looking up and down, not at a Gnorc or some run-of-the-mill baddie, but rather...a dragon. This, in and of itself, would hardly have raised alarms, only...he didn't know this dragon, at all. It was roughly his own size, darkly-hued, and staring back at him with mutual shock. Its jaw was slack, teeth hinting slight flashes of white, before it closed, then attempted words. Well, just one:

"...Spyro?"

The purple dragon's confusion compounded, shock atop shock. His brow knitted low on one side, and arched up high on the other. Only his mouth dared to move.

"Uh, hi," he chanced, narrowing his eyes. "You know my...do I know you?"

The dragon's voice finally registered as female, as he watched her confusion surrender to a sudden, unbridled joy. He didn't have time to step back, as she was upon him too fast. With a hard tackle and a sudden warmth, she had him pinned to the grass, either laughing or sobbing. There was no way to separate the contradicting sounds, as her muzzle pressed in against his, and held there.

"It's you!" she whimpered, slumping over his toppled form in a wave of exhaustion. "It's you, Spyro, I...I never thought I...hah! You're not...but, I know! I know, it's you!"

"H-hey," Spyro started, struggling as politely as possible to get upright again. "I'm glad you're glad, but...c-could you get off me, please?"

The dragoness nodded rapidly, sniffing loudly. She slid off of him, offering her forepaw as a helping hand; Spyro didn't notice it as he helped himself up, shook the grass off, and cleared his throat in a bid at dignity. He took a precious moment to better see her: she was darker than him, dark-violet nearing black. Her pink belly ran in contrast, as did lighter patterns tracing her muzzle and head over, like runic birthmarks. Multiple white horns differed so brightly that they almost distracted from a deep pair of emerald eyes, and he realized she was watching him watching her, and letting him do so willingly.

"You...don't know me, do you?" she said, more slowly, a little more guarded. Maybe she settled on the same thought, at the same time. "I'm sorry, I just...I can explain why...I'm so happy to see you..."

Her draconic muzzle pinched upwards as she stifled something, and Spyro took the initiative:

"Hey, sure, that's...uh, fine. Just, don't cry, okay? Let's not do that?"

"I'm not sad," she laughed, sniffing harder.

"Yeah, great, but let's still not. So...what's your name?"

"...Cynder."

Spyro let the name settle into his brain, only for it to rattle around in the space, unrecognized.

"I'm really sorry, but that doesn't ring any bells," he offered, shrugging his feral shoulders, as Sparx willowed and wisped about the female curiously. "So, silly question, but...how do you know me, exactly?"

"We...you and I went through a lot together," Cynder began, trying to keep measured. "Though, from the looks of everything around us...that was another world. Had to have been. You and I, we made it to the end of the World, literally. You...well, you saved it. After that, I...think I drifted a long while, like in a sleep. I don't know how much time has passed, but...it looks like I wound up here. And here...you are...I mean, it isn't you, but...but it..."

Though she didn't cry, Spyro still winced the slightest bit.

"Well...I admit, I've done some world-saving, of my own, heh," he chuckled, not hating the idea that another version of him was that awesome. "Guess that's not a shock. So, you woke up here, then?"

"Moments ago, I assume, yes."

"Wow. Okay."

The both of them stared at each other. Rather, he stared at, and she stared through, and he could feel it. He'd toppled countless nasty baddies, of all sizes, even at his young age; but there and then, Spyro felt absolutely helpless. There had to be a way around this. *Think!*

"Ah, it sounds like you might want to talk to the elders back at Stone Hill, then," he coughed, forcing the words out. "No point in standing out here! Let's get you back h...well, let's get you there."

She seemed all the more ready to faint than him; at least now, he understood why. More or less. Cynder took a sharp breath, held it, then let it loose again, nodding instead.

"...Okay."

The trek back was hardly a long one, but as silence settled in and got comfortable, it felt more and more like it. On his own Spyro had his thoughts to himself, or rather, a happy lack of them. In

company, they seemed to stick close, and chafe.

What in the world he should say to her eluded him; nothing seemed apt, or comforting, or remotely clever. He did his best to look back at Cynder without looking, which indeed proved difficult. Stolen peeks suggested she was alternating between the world around her, and him alone. Sparx fluttered nearer, bobbing once, buzzing his wings. Spyro shrugged, defeated.

"You don't look *exactly* alike," Cynder interjected, making his wings twitch. "It's odd."

"Really?" he said, finally taking permission to glance back. "How so?"

"You seem a tiny bit...smaller..."

"Puh. I'm a good size for my age," Spyro reflexively countered, regretting it. "I mean, I'm still young. I've got plenty of growing ahead of me, you'll see."

"Sorry, it wasn't a slight," Cynder replied. A knowing smile was all over the words, he just knew it. "I mean, you just seem a bit brighter and younger, is all. It's not a bad thing!"

"Well. Thank you."

"And Sparx talked."

At this, Spyro halted outright.

"No kidding."

Cynder shook her head *no*, grinning.

"No," Spyro elaborated, "I mean, *no kidding*. I know he can talk, he's *been* talking."

Sparx looped a few times, buzzing louder. Spyro perked up, looked at the bug, and made what Cynder could only have understood as *a face*.

"I mean, kind of, yeah," Spyro quickly muttered to Sparx, eyeing her.

"I mean, he spoke *words*," Cynder corrected. "Lots of them. He didn't speak 'buzz'."

This, of all things, did make Spyro think.

"Neat! Well...what did he sound like?"

"Hard to say," she sighed, walking ahead, against the breeze. "It kept changing—"

At the top of the hill, she paused. The metallic tip of her tail whipped unhappily. The moment Spyro caught up, the same unpleasant recoil hit, and both parties paused to spy the stone hill below.

"Do you smell that?" Cynder asked, wrinkling her nostrils some. Spyro glowered, snorting.

"...Yeah. And I know who it is."

The area below them remained vacant, but only for a moment. Before Spyro could take any kind of action a shrill cry broke the quiet, and something small and pitiful took off across a grassy opening, between stone pillars and a large dividing wall. It seemed too small and fast to make out at a glance, but what came rumbling after it didn't have that problem.

"Oh, no," Spyro groaned, as a comparatively enormous reptile thundered clear through a wall, bashing it apart as it tore past. Clearly a dragon, albeit bluer and far larger than either of them, it flicked debris off with a single flap of its wings, looked in the direction the thing had screamed off towards, and roared in reply, charging into the wall it had just fled behind. Its huge horns bore the crash easily, its massive jawline curled into a snarl as it steamrolled after its quarry..

"That's...an odd dragon," Cynder murmured, as Spyro took off down the slope..

"It's Crush, and yes! He's bad news!"

Cynder stopped thinking, straightened up, and followed, abandoning her hesitation on the hilltop. Both of them bolted over a bordering wall, skidding into fighting stances in unison, as another section of wall exploded into a dust cloud nearby. Out from the dust came something much smaller, much closer to their size—and considerably more vocal.

"GRACIOUS ME, HELP!"

It was yet another dragon, so far as either Spyro or Cynder could tell. He ran towards them, wide-eyed and agog, clutching a leather bag that was just large enough to put his run into more of an awkward stumble.

"Do...you know this one?" Cynder asked, staying in stance. Spyro shifted anxiously, shaking his horned head fast, just as the quaking of Crush's footfall interrupted.

"Nope!"

"PLEASEPLEASEOHPLEASE—"

With only the barest of acknowledgment the small dragon continued on past them both, caught in an all-consuming panic. With Crush emerging in ponderous slow motion from the cloud, however, priorities realigned, and the two dragons leapt toward him, claws out.

In the ensuing fracas the fleeing dragon looked back, just long enough to take a tumble forward over himself. The contents of the leather bag spilled out in a jumble of bright-colored candies, scattering through the grass, and the panicked dragon tried frantically to scoop them back in. The sounds of various roars and the thuds and bangs of battle drew too close, too quick, and Crush's clawed foot slammed down beside him; the dragon screamed and rolled off to the side, away from the fight. More accurately, the *attempt* was made.

"I thought the Professor...was teaching him," Spyro growled, narrowly ducking low as Crush brought a humongous bone sailing by, swinging it like a club. "Nestor won't like this!"

"Maybe he flunked out of class!" Cynder barked, flipping up over the same swinging attack.

Crush bellowed something in fluent roar, incensed. Both dragons landed with less than a second to dodge as his oversized club pounded the ground, sending shock waves out. Spyro split to one side of the beast, drawing in a deep breath, and as a fellow dragon, Cynder knowingly did the same. Both parties blasted out a burst of flame, battering Crush's larger body on both sides; yet, as much damage as it did, the howling giant persisted, and caught Spyro in the ribs with a wide, hard kick.

"Spyro!" Cynder hollered, seeing him sail off ahead.

His smaller body bounced as it met the turf, saying hello and goodbye, before finally reuniting with a dead roll on the grass. The dragon limply tried to stand, succeeding in a dizzy wobble on all fours. He shook it off, spitting out some grass, before thoughtlessly swallowing, then coughing.

"Guh, what," he sputtered, swallowing again. "What was that?"

He looked down at the impact spot, seeing mostly torn grass and dirt—then, for a moment, what looked like a few small orbs, or polished rocks. A sweet smell lingered around them, and he patted his scaled belly in confusion. Had he swallowed one?

"—ook out!"

The daylight dropped into darkness as Spyro saw the gigantic bone peak overhead, then crash down with murderous intent. What he had swallowed was demoted to unimportant as he bolted right, the bone missing by such a sliver that the impact force flattened out against his back, his body tumbling off in a clumsy half-dodge.

He saw Cynder gliding over, eyes so wide that her green pupils were nearly specks on white. She wasn't looking at him. He quickly charted her gaze to Crush, who towered above Spyro; the brutish dragon grinned, threw his thick arms out, and simply belly-flopped onto him, slamming the firmament.

"No!" Cynder wailed, using the momentum of her gliding to bash into Crush's sides. For her trouble, she was gracelessly bounced back, the impact absorbed with ease into the bigger creature's bulk. "No, no! Get off him!"

"GUHEHEHEH," Crush cackled stupidly, all dominance and teeth.

"I said, get off!" Cynder roared, headbutting into him again and again.

Smug as anything with no brain could be, Crush shook his large head, snorting dismissively at her as she seethed. The look on Crush's face only lasted so long, however, as a low, ominous tremor tickled out from under-bulk. His dim eyes blinked, then slowly looked down as the rumble swelled into an angry quake, underneath him, and as he and Cynder both stopped to watch, something incredible happened.

One purple foot pushed out from under Crush, then another, followed by ankles, then legs. A tail lengthened free, getting thicker, longer, every second. Shortly after appeared one clawed paw, then wrist, then forearm, followed by the other. The rumbling increased as all five digits unceremoniously swelling longer, yet, extending out and out in surreal time.

No, Cynder realized, watching on in fascination. Not just longer. Thicker, wider. Stronger.

Bigger.

Crush's grunt fell into a groan as his huge body lurched higher, lifting up with a sudden surge. At first, it was an inch, at best. The next lurch shoved him up half a foot, then a full foot atop that! Where there had been five digits, there was now Spyro, in full, every bit as big as Crush!

No...bigger than him!

His broadening paws found the ground, and the feral dragon's emerging head outsized Crush's as it raised up, and up. Within moments, Spyro had blown up from his usual three feet to nearly fifteen, edging out the huge brute in scope. Spyro's eyes opened, and it only took a moment's comprehension for the enlarged little dragon to go from wincing to smiling, and smiling wide.

"RUUUH?" Crush gawked, suddenly riding the bulge of Spyro's huge chest plates.

Before he could get any nearer to a real thought, both of Spyro's massive paws were on his sides, and to Cynder (and yes, Crush's) amazement, Spyro was picking him clear-up off of him. Holding him. Handling him like a whelp.

"Save it," Spyro boomed, his voice having swollen powerfully deep within his growing body, as he brought himself up on two legs, held the smaller Crush out ahead of him, and then twisted around. He spun three increasingly-huge times, nearing 17 feet, then 18. At 19 feet, the third circling, he let go and flung the massive dragon with embarrassing ease. Crush's wail went with him as Spyro sent him flying, in the manner no dragon would ever choose. He landed so far away that only a cloud of grit and grass could confirm he was anywhere at all. When the humbled beast emerged, far off in the background, it yelped and fled in outright terror.

Spyro took in a huge breath, inflating his stretching plates nicely, before blasting out a strong, final snort. Two massive, treasure-chest sized mitts dusted one another, thick claws scraping together, as he thudded back down heavily onto all fours and stopped to look himself over.

"Spyro!" Cynder gasped, not sure where across his 19-foot body to look, as he lowered to about thirteen in a quadrupedal stance. "That was...you...look at you!"

"Hah, I am!" he laughed, his voice so thick and strong that it echoed around her smaller body. He idly flexed an arm, then stopped, blinking. "Wait, no—are you okay?"

"I...yes, I am! Uh, t-thank you...Spyro..."

Despite the presence of scales, and all their heralded defenses, they did nothing to mask the sudden blush painted all over Cynder's muzzle as she drank him in. He smiled a much better smile, and nodded down at her.

"Good."

"OH—"

That same small voice interrupted, meekly; the pair glanced over at the small dragon, who finally came shivering and wide-eyed out into the open again. His fists were clenched into solid masses as he panted and knocked at the knees. He saw them both, nodded, then started collecting those odd balls from the grass...before he shot upright again, and stared in complete awe at Spyro.

"Gracious, thank you both," he said, looking between Spyro and the few collected little balls in his hands. "Goodness, gracious, I'll be! Ah, aha, do pardon my rudeness! I, eh, see you dispatched that oversized fellow—thanks, again! Ah, you *were* smaller a moment ago, I could have sworn. I'm sorry to pry, but did you...perhaps...eat one of these, beforehand?"

Spyro cocked his head, regarding him.

"I think I might have, yeah. Those were yours?"

The small dragon seemed rather like Spyro, upon observation—at least, in terms of hue. He too had purple scales, though lighter, more lavender; his horns were more orange, and his belly plates were pink. He had a bit more of a subtle paunch going, as well. A gentle pear-shape, one might think. The stranger nodded briskly, getting the rest of the orbs into the leather bag he carried.

"They were, yes, haha—well, they *are*. But how curious! How very, awfully curious!"

"You have a whole bag of that magical medicine at your disposal?" Cynder asked, approaching cautiously. "And you never used a single one on yourself? I don't understand..."

"Hey, yeah," the enlarged Spyro seconded, nodding his huge head. He thumped down into a hefty seat, shaking the area, loosening a few stones from where Crush had broken through the walls. "That's right! You could have outgrown Crush, no sweat. I mean, heh...I-I'm not exactly complaining..."

"Oh no, no," the dragon stammered, clearing his throat. "You see, these are mere candies! They shouldn't have...well, they shouldn't be doing *this*!" At that, he gestured at the towering giant Spyro had swollen up into. "This is remarkable! What would Blarion think?"

"Who?" Cynder asked. "Wait, no...who are *you*?"

"My creator, Blarion," the dragon hummed, already busy with poking and prodding scientifically at Spyro, lifting his huge paw off the ground, only for Spyro to chuckle, and place his massive hand over all of the dragon's little head. "And ah, I am Figment! His creation, of sorts!"

"I've never seen you around any of the Worlds," Spyro said, as Figment hugged an entire clawed finger, looking it over. "Where are you from?"

"Ah! London!" he cheerfully replied, letting Spyro's huge hand thud back to the grass.

"Never heard of it," Cynder and Spyro both muttered, in sync.

"Well, if I am correct, I...do think I came from rather far off," Figment sighed, cinching up the neck of the nearby bag. "I am fairly confident I arrived here through a wormhole."

"A what?" Cynder asked, narrowing her eyes.

"A portal, of sorts."

"Heck, we have those!" Spyro boomed, then apologetically winced, still adjusting to the sheer power of his voice, let alone his massive body. The smile was impossible to remove from his muzzle, a clear and certain glee plastered to his face as he kept looking himself over. "A bunch of them, even. Did you come through one of those?"

"Do you?" Figment asked, perking up. "Fascinating! I suppose I did, then!"

"Same as with me," Cynder mused, not sure where to take what she suddenly had, but sure she had something, just the same.

"You said those candies of yours didn't make you any bigger, when you used to eat them?" Spyro asked, as Cynder thought on.

"Well, no, they're just treats. I've never been...well...big," Figment said absently, the thought hitting him for the first time in his existence. "I was imagined at a certain size, after all. Ah, I...hmm, that is a thought! In passing between dimensions, encased in energy...that very energy from the experiment...I should wonder, were they imbued? Did they perhaps take on certain properties?"

He opened the bag back up, and saw something he had utterly failed to note. Colors. Multiple colors, in fact! *Blue, green, gold, black, pink, red*, he tallied.

"Could you tell me, er..."

"Spyro," the much bigger dragon said, grinning.

"Spyro! Yes, would you happen to recall which color candy you swallowed?"

"Nope! I hit the ground so hard, I ate it...and some grass. Couldn't say!"

"Drat," Figment sighed, undeterred. "Ah, well...I suppose with some dutiful cataloging, I can suss out what colors hold which properties...unless they all increase size?"

"I can help," Spyro instantly broke in, beaming.

"Ah, maybe don't, Spyro," Cynder added, having to stand up on hind legs to reach up and put halting paws on his gigantic hand, as he reached for Figment and the bag. "You may have lucked into the growth spurt, we don't know what any others may do to you!"

Spyro fought the logic for a moment, and huffed and nodded.

"Ah, no, you're right, sorry. Just, kind of tempted..."

"No need to apologize, you look rather an incredible sight," Figment chirped, nodding. "I should wonder why you haven't reverted by now. By chance, is it a permanent effect?"

Spyro should have gone pale at the thought, but his smile curled up even higher.

"Like, forever? You're *sure* I can't help you figure these out—"

"No!" Cynder sighed, coming between them both. "I'm sure this isn't what Figment came here for, if he's this surprised. What *are* you here for, exactly?"

"No plan, I admit. A bit of a mistake, on my part, yes," Figment murmured, smiling crookedly. "A fault with a new energy device my creator and I worked on seems to have sent me here."

"So, a portal might return you home, then?" she asked as Spyro listened on, idly enjoying a stray flex. "I mean, if one of them brought you here."

"I suppose, yes. Solid logic."

"Well, your magic candies helped out, big-time," Cynder replied. "I think the least we can do is get you home, right?"

"Of course," Spyro added, puffing up proudly. "Just say the word, and we can get you to the nearest portal, no problem."

Throughout their conversation, someone watched. In the swirl of magic in an old iron cauldron, the three dragons could be seen, be heard, discussing magics and concepts that floored the interloper.

"Impossible," the diminutive reptile growled, watching intently from beyond the cauldron's rim. "Such a miraculous thing in this realm...and Spyro gets the first taste!?! Nonsense! I won't have it!"

Amid all the grousing, the door to the lair was smashed off its hinges, and Crush limped through, just barely able to fit. The reptile at the cauldron spun about angrily, standing on a stepladder to reach its rim. His robe swirled about in as angry a fashion as the horned little dinosaur regarded his underling, who whined and grumbled and gestured over his bruises.

"So what?" the dinosaur snarled, looking back to the cauldron. "You didn't even realize what sort of amazing stuff they had on hand, when you attacked! But I know now...oh, I know. Crush! Gulp! Hut-to! We're not letting this goofy little dragon get anywhere near anything that could take him home!"

Figment talked on, as his face reflected in the cauldron's pool.

"...Not when he has what I want! What I *need*!"

2.

Figment had seen it all, at least all of the *all* London had to offer—horses and carriages, cycles and wheelbarrows, tractors and even a few automobiles. Being hurled into another realm of time and space hadn't shocked him so much, given his readings in the library, full of theories and hypotheses. Yet, incredibly, the incredible had found him, still; it just hadn't arrived the way he had figured.

A dragon 19 feet tall at the horns thumped along beside him on all fours, beaming. It was Spyro's world, but it hadn't been perfected until today. He might as well have been a hundred feet tall, the way he carried himself. The offer to be carried had been cheerfully made, yet Figment kindly resisted, preferring to walk along beside Spyro and Cynder, his bag of candies in tow. Sparx flitted around Spyro, the most impressed of the lot.

Cynder had taken to flight a few minutes earlier, out of practicality; as it turned out, keeping pace with something that big's stride was quite difficult. The bag jumbled and grumbled in Figment's grip as he trundled nearby, trying not to stumble on himself as he kept up.

To think, his humble candies had such powers, now! Oh, to find out what they were!

Just think of it as part of a larger experiment, Figment thought, the small dragon unable to help chuckling. *Which, of course, it is.*

The candies chattered and clacked as they rustled, talking back, agreeing with his suppositions, tugging at the ample thread of his curiosity. The temptation to try one soared—any one, of any color, just to see which ones did what. Scientific and personal motivations married more smoothly than he would have postulated, and yes, every now and again, his eyes would travel right up the mountainous tower that Spyro had grown into. *Scientific observation, naturally.*

He had never been big before. The thought hadn't even troubled him once.

"You should just have one, you know?" Spyro's enlarged voice rumbled, a bit blunt, but amicably honest. "Get a couple of giant dragons to discourage evildoers of any doer-ing."

"Oh, don't," Cynder laughed, not meaning to, as she saw Figment light up. "We have no idea what sort of powder keg he has there, in his bag. It could be pure chaos."

"Better in our claws, than Ripto's," Spyro replied, in earnest.

"Who?" both Figment and Cynder wondered, making the towering Spyro stop his thudding, and turn his swollen bulk around to them. His smile was lower, and his look was as heavy as he.

"Right, I guess Cynder's version doesn't have him. Okay. Ripto is a dinosaur, a mean little creep. Bad temper, magic powers, prone to abuse them on whims, and he whims frequently. Seriously, if he got the power to get gigantified, it'd be terrible."

"We used to have dinosaurs in my world," Figment murmured, eyes widening. "How very fascinating that they should exist here, well and in health!"

"He is *not* well," Spyro grumbled, turning back. "There's every chance Crush fled to tattle on us, if he's a bad guy again. So, we really need to make sure Ripto's health and height don't increase, so let's hustle to the portal gateway. It's close by."

"I admit," Figment sighed, the breeze buffeting quietly at his back, "it'd be a shame to depart so soon. Such an amazing world, I would document so much of it, if I could! Blarion would just die!"

"Then, it's good he missed the portal here," Cynder said as she coasted overhead..

Figment blinked, then laughed hard.

"What?" she asked, circling back.

"Oh, no, no. He wouldn't be in danger, other than the threat of death by envy."

"Why would you want him to die?"

Figment only laughed harder. Spyro stayed out of it.

"Good grief! It's just a turn of phrase, he would be very-much alive. Oh, I bet I wouldn't *ever* see him again, were he to start notating, and..."

At last, the thought hit. Perhaps it had before, but distraction had been in generous supply throughout. His laugh dropped to the ground, suddenly leaden. The other dragons went far enough ahead to note his absence, then looked back as Figment stood in place, stricken.

"Hey," Spyro started, hesitating. For all his size, he was immediately floundering, vulnerable in the face of emotional availability. "I'm sure your Blarion is okay. I'll bet he's...working on getting you back, as we speak!"

Figment smiled and nodded, but the way his arms squeezed the bag spoke louder.

"Hah, yes," he said, gulping dryly. "Yes, yes, he is brilliant. I'm sure you're right."

Spyro seemed genuinely shocked that he had succeeded, and cleared his huge throat.

"Yeah! So, uh, try not to worry, okay?"

"I bet the portal will get you right back to him," Cynder added, above. "For sure."

"Hey, there it is, now," Spyro interjected. "See? Just like I said, no problem."

Figment darted ahead of them both, looking the stone archway over. It framed a flowing portal of bright energy, and it did look...well, similar enough to his own portal to rekindle his optimism.

"Ah, perfect," Figment answered, turning back to them, doing a small start as he saw Spyro's full size from up close, no less from the front. "Well, I suppose this is the door, isn't it? Bad form to mangle, and all that. Bit of a shame, it being so brief."

"You can linger anytime, Figment," Cynder soothed, landing beside him.

"What she said," Spyro added, smiling down over his huge feral chest. "You can come back anytime, okay? You're always welcome here!"

"You're too kind, both of you," Figment said. The smile he couldn't force now refused to leave.

"And you can bring all the candies you want—"

"Anyway," Cynder interrupted. "It was a pleasure, Figment! Please, tell your Blarion hello for us, okay? He sounds like a good sort."

"Oh, he'll want to hear all about it, believe you-me!"

Figment stood before the portal on the balls of his little purple feet, and bowed graciously enough for the Queen Mum's Mum. Both Spyro and Cynder grinned unevenly, eyed one another, and attempted to bow back. Spyro's sheer scale proved enough to send a rush of displaced air down over Figment, who blushed darkly at its passage. Perhaps, for another instant, that same temptation returned, so powerful it seemed to nearly pull at him.

Funnily, it was very-nearly a real sensation.

Wait.

GOOD GRACIOUS—

The hand that snatched Figment by his shoulder was big enough to more than cover it, meaning pulling him into the portal was no bother at all. While he couldn't see the one pulling, he could see Spyro and Cynder going slack-jawed, then suddenly yelling after him as the portal closed, and everything instead became a blur of energy, motion and fear.

"What was that?" Cynder balked, blinking rapidly.

"Oh, no," Spyro groaned, wincing. "I know that hand. Big, stupid, barely articulate..."

"Ripto?"

"He's a pipsqueak. That was...*Gulp.*"

"...Well, no suspense, Spyro, who is it?"

"What? No, I wasn't—ah, Sparx, you go back and wait for me! His *name* is Gulp, and he—"

"Ripto?"

Spyro glared, nodding, as Sparx grudgingly left. He turned back to the portal, snorting powerfully, his chest surging out with raw strength. In lighter circumstances, he'd have taken a moment to enjoy it. A fraction of a moment would have to do.

"...Ripto."

For too long there was nothing; then, too soon, there was the floor.

Given that Figment had thought it to be the ceiling on entry, he surmised their landing (and therefore, their flight) had been less than graceful. His scales only did so much as he bounced hard,

tumbling into a roll on the stonework; his bag rattled after him, bumping against his sides as he attempted to right himself.

Whatever had grabbed him was big, that much he figured out on the trip; but what could it—

"UHHH...RUUUH..."

He turned in time to see an unreasonably massive maw looming behind him, a humongous tooth jutting from scaly lips, like some creature had half-succeeded in swallowing a mountain. The unflattering details belonged to a gigantic green reptile, a quadruped, its chin nearly tapping the floor as it sniffed Figment over. It was either investigating, or investigating, then *eating*.

"Yipes," Figment squeaked, gathering up his bag in a hurry. One single candy rolled loose, but he scooped it up and stuffed it back into the bag, backing frantically away. "S-stay back! These are, uh, p-poison! Wouldn't want you to eat one and keel over!"

The much larger creature rumbled, confused, when another, more intelligent voice cut in from above, making Figment leap off the floor:

"Poison, you say? That's no good! I better take them off your hands, then..."

Figment slowly glanced back, then up, tracing the source of the voice; what he found led him neither to scream or shout, but instead exhale in relief. The threat stood no more than a few feet tall, at best, a reptile decked in a cape and collar that somehow still seemed too big for him.

"Oh," Figment sighed, "boy, the scare you gave me! I thought I was done for, hah."

The blatant alleviation on Figment's face made the reptile's cheeks burn dark, someplace between fury and deep embarrassment. An *old* embarrassment.

"You might just be, dragon!" he hissed, leering angrily from atop a throne atop a stony stairwell, leading down towards Figment and Gulp. A wand was in his hand, and that wand circled in the air a moment, before Figment's two little wings twitched, then sagged, weighed down by glowing magics. His fear returned as he tried to flap them, and found himself utterly grounded.

"What? Did you really think I would let you fly free?"

Ripto snapped his clawed fingers, and a series of dull-witted thumps and thuds echoed, until the apparent throne room began to quake. The creature that bounded near, he had met. "Crush! Did you seal the portal, just now, as instructed?"

Crush opened his mouth to roar something, but Ripto was already on a tear:

"Good! Get that bag away from that goofy little runt, and bring it to me!"

Several hypotheticals occurred. Rather briskly, Figment settled on the best one.

The purple dragon twisted around and bolted, scurrying off in whatever direction a door happened to be in. Mercifully there was one nearby, leading upward. As a failed chooser, he chose

beggar, and vaulted up its stairwell, Crush thooming stupidly after with a great roar.

"Gulp!" Ripto shouted.

"HUHUUH," Gulp started, tiredly thudding his way along down another doorway, seemingly well-aware of where to go, and just what to do.

Conversely, Figment was a scrambling dervish, skidding into corners and knocking over ramshackle armor as he careened and wove, skillfully managing to collide with everything he shouldn't. Crush's booming steps echoed nearby as Figment met an unwelcome fork in the hallway, glanced down both paths, then groaned and banked left. He tarried, then turned and rolled the loose armor down the path on the right, letting it tumble noisily down it.

"Pleasepleasepleaseohplease—"

His frantic whispers weren't enough to give him away as he snuck down the left hallway, gritting his teeth in terror when a roar blasted along the stone walls—only for the bellowing and trampling to fade to the right, further and further. His heart slammed all wrong in his chest as he crept a little further, paused...then tore off, desperate to put as much distance between them as possible. He could have run right back to London and the Gents room, and it wouldn't have sufficed.

The doorway at the end of his path grudgingly creaked open as he pushed for all he was worth, emerging into the evening air as he stumbled onto a long and weathered *chemin de ronde* lining the outer ramparts. Being much too small to clear the actual wall, Figment ran to the nearest aperture, peered out, and gasped.

"Good grief!"

Molten lava. Liquid magma, specifically, likely basalt. That he could feel its heat from this high up over the crags and craters bordering the castle didn't help his fears. The books he had read to understand this very thing would have burned to cinders, before even touching it!

"Cynder," Figment murmured, thinking fast. "I came through the portal, then it was sealed! If there were other portals close by, that reptile would have shown some kind of concern, meaning it's the only one...meaning they'll have to travel in, on their own! Alright, Spyro, he knows this world, he can fly, so they'll come through the air, for certain, so...I need a way to alert them, from *their* vantage points...think, think...how do I..."

As he scoured the castle exterior, he noticed that the outer ramparts all connected, as they of course would. He realized, then, that the rampart hallways would logically connect. Left to right. A *full circle*, in other words.

"Oh, dear..."

The thuds rose steadily as something big and dumb barreled through the ramparts on the far right to him, making the wall-walk start to rattle as his supplies of fresh panic came back in stock. Again, he tried his wings, but nothing came of it—well, aside from more terror.

"OH, DEAR!"

Before Crush could come blasting through the nearest outer-entrance, something equally big burst through a wall behind him. Through the sudden eruption of dust and stone, a humongous silhouette slammed down onto the walk, snapping the rock facade as geysers of smoke blew out where he landed. Gulp emerged, undeterred by gravity or sense, and the moment Figment broke into a run opposite him; the right-side doors blew open, and Crush was suddenly barreling towards their side.

Figment stopped for a fraction of a fraction, caught between both parties, then spun around and flung himself into a slide underneath Gulp, clearing the other side. He shoved his way back indoors, hearing Crush skid into Gulp; the two gigantic bodies impacted, causing severe tumult as he ran further off, laughing hysterically. It wasn't a fun laugh.

He backtracked down the hallway, and through the odd slitted window or three, Figment thought perhaps he saw two objects in the skies above, just maybe. It made no rational sense to do so, with such a lack of empirical evidence, but still:

"HERE!" he wailed, awkwardly clutching the bag, his little legs burning away as they pumped in prolonged exhaustion. Even indoors, he shouted, nearly screaming. "DOWN HERE! I'M HERE!"

If they had heard him, if anyone had been in the skies in the first place, Figment couldn't tell. Another fork, hard right. A left. A door! This time he attempted to ram it outright, merely slamming full-speed into the wood and iron, and bouncing back in pain. The door might have budged a whole inch. Had things been less dire, he'd have been proud to have managed that much.

Instead, Figment was already back on his feet, collecting his bag and squeezing every unhappy molecule through the slight opening he'd created, popping out onto a large stony balcony. He hugged the stone railing, his head darting every which way as he spied the descending night sky. *He had* seen them, right? Surely, he had!

He checked below, having no other good options at the ready; a large tiled portion of a lower roof sloped down, in severe disrepair, cutting off over what seemed to be a lake of lava. Well, *magma*.

Figment sucked air through his teeth, looking back behind him, just as several competing thumps and bangs battered towards him, making him back up flat against the railing.

"Huh, ah," he spluttered, looking down at the bag. "I-if I was big, I..."

So, it had already come to this. Brute force!

He opened the bag as the thudding swelled, shaking the balcony. Inside were all the colors from before, every single one an unknowable element. What if one shrank him down?

Well, they might not see me, at tinier sizes—

Just eat one!

What if I just eat them all? Would I up and explode!?

JUST. EAT. ONE!

"Oh, blast it," Figment moaned, picking up a pink candy, and opening his maw, only for the doorway to blow off its withered hinges as both Crush and Gulp smashed onto the balcony, slamming down on it in unison.

Figment wobbled, dropping the candy, watching it roll down onto the roof below, vanishing into an opening in the tile work. He cried out and readied another, only for Crush to raise his club, roar furiously, and bring it down with a terrible crash. The impact snapped the old stones and loosened mortar, flecks spraying, cracks deepening, as the entire balcony broke off its foundations and tumbled into a skid along the roof.

Figment's cries tangled with Crush and Gulp as all three parties bellowed and held on. The separated balcony crashed and rocked as it bounced on countless cracking tiles, a trail of smoke trailing behind. Figment readied the candy, only to drop it from the sheer amount of bouncing they were doing; he resorted to clutching the bag as he wheeled once more on his little heels, then dashed like mad toward the two surprised giants. His attempts to leap over them failed miserably as, in seconds, Crush had him by his neck, with a hand too big for most of Figment's body.

"RUUUUH!"

With that, Gulp had the bag hooked by the loop with his tooth, easily yanking it from Figment's grasping claws.

"*G-give tht bkk,*" Figment wheezed, as Crush explained his moniker with a simple tightening of his grip. Even without their newfound properties, their powers, Figment would have fought just as hard to keep the bag of candies; they were the only thing he had that Blarion had given him. His legs kicked and scabbled, scratching Gulp's head, as Crush tried to hold him down and raise his club high, all as the balcony kept sliding closer towards the roof's edge.

Not that. Not that! You can't have them. No!

Any second now, the sky would be replaced by the shifting landscape as they fell off into the lake, to burn to nothing. Any second now, it wouldn't matter.

But still—

The night stars and moon vanished, as he stared up beyond Crush's head; yet, there was no blazing orange lava, no molten embrace of doom. Instead, a massive dark shape crashed down, landing on the balcony, stopping it just yards shy of the brink. The form gained familiarity as Crush was grabbed by his neck with one gigantic, purple hand, and before Figment could say it, before he could cry in blessed relief—the roof caved in.

The balcony, Figment, Spyro, Crush, Cynder and Gulp all came crashing down through the opening, the balcony's side hitting a wooden beam, bouncing it like a flipping coin. Both Gulp and Crush were hurled off, roaring in disapproval, as the three dragons all hung on, tight.

"HOLD ON!" Spyro boomed, gathering the both of them up to his huge scales and balling himself up tight, moments before the balcony crashed into a long stairwell, rolled down it, then circled with intensifying speed, until it came to a stop, cracked, then snapped in two.

The ball that was Spyro bounced hard off of snapping beams, rattling chains and toppling gibbets as he landed into a skid, thumping into some menacing torture device, and breaking it clean in half. Even being nearly 20 feet tall, Spyro was hardly invincible, and his body decided there and then to remind him of such, as the huge dragon groaned and unfurled.

Before Cynder could even stand upright, Figment was on Spyro, tackling him in a kind of frantic hug. She shook her head, blinked, then saw the moment and smiled.

"I knew it!" Figment laughed, coughing some too. "I *knew* you were up there! Hah!"

"Ugh," was all that Spyro could manage as he shifted his gigantic bulk sloppily, looking down at Figment. He looked around, perhaps awkwardly, and gave the tinier dragon's back a good, solidarity-laden pat. "Yeah...we saw all the crashing and smoke, so...good job."

"Are you okay, Figment?" Cynder asked, though she was clearly checking on Spyro first.

"Better now! I'm so glad you both came!"

"Okay, okay," Spyro muttered, popping his back loudly, then wiggling back to form, and huffing out the pain. "What matters is we're all together, again, in this...dungeon..."

"I have to admit, it is a bit hard to figure out how we're getting out of here," Cynder hummed, looking the dank, dark prison over.

"Nah," Spyro replied, grinning. "We fly! Figment, you're with me!"

He straightened up, then growled in pain, and slipped back down to the stone floor, snorting in irritation. Cynder looked his backside over, then clicked her tongue.

"It's your wing."

"Great...how bad?"

"It'll heal, but not in minutes."

"Ah, that's on me, isn't it?" Figment sighed, blushing. "Bit of a muck-up, trying to un-muck me, no less. That means Cynder can't fly us all out, since Spyro is too big..."

"I'm a good size, thank you," Spyro laughed, then winced, trying to push the surge of pain down. "Don't worry about me, either of you."

"I'm worried about *us*," Cynder corrected, tapping her talons on the stone flooring. "We're stuck here, now. At least, for long enough to be a concern."

"Well, the portal I was pulled through earlier," Figment began, thinking aloud. "Ripto mentioned it had been sealed off, so that isn't an option in...or out."

"Right, we tried, but got redirected to another valley," Spyro said, nodding.

"Well, the portal is still there, back in the throne room..."

"The throne room?" Cynder repeated. She looked up wistfully at the opening high above, and the night sky, then sighed and returned her sight to the walls and chains and torches. "That means..."

"Yeah," Spyro huffed, grinning. "That means, a fight."

"But your wing," Figment began, only for Spyro to put a massive paw in front of him, cutting him off casually.

"I'll walk. At my size, puh, those wimps don't stand a chance!"

"You're sure?" Cynder asked, genuinely worried. "We don't even know if the portal can—"

In reply, Spyro puffed up, swelling his chest plates loud enough to be heard. Seeing Figment distracted from what she was about to say, Cynder thought better of it, and stopped outright.

"Do you think you saw enough of the castle to find the throne room back?" he asked Figment.

"I...saw that the castle is a giant circle, so...yes, more or less. The center."

"Great. Lead the way!"

Despite it being his own order, Spyro was already walking ahead of them, disappearing into the pitch beyond the nearest torchlight. Cynder followed along, gently nudging for Figment to take his rightful spot, when a cacophony of growls and snorts rose from the dark; within seconds, Spyro reemerged, a barely-masked panic all over his muzzle.

"That way! That way!" he roared, nearly mowing the smaller two down as an army of Rhynocs charged after. The wave of enraged rhino-men stormed the stairwell and poured out of unused cells, countless huge tusks bore in a collective bloodlust.

Spyro vanished in the new direction, and they followed. Between the two masses were Figment and Cynder, both of whom ran together, nearly in unison, until she took to the air.

"We'll lose pace at this rate!" Cynder huffed, wings flapping. "Figment, just fly!"

"I-I can't! My wings, h-he...a spell!"

The Rhynoc horde raged closer as Spyro brought his huge head and horns down and battered clear through a double-door, bashing it apart. Suddenly, Figment's imagination kicked in, in fits and starts. It proved enough.

"Spyro!" Figment shouted, between gasps for air. "Beam! Rip off a support beam!"

Spyro grinned, understanding enough of the equation, and reared up at full-speed, ramming his head into a high beam as thick around as Figment's entire body; it cracked and fell onto the huge dragon's horns, and Spyro jerked his head back, hard, sending it flying behind him.

"Cynder!" he boomed, still charging ahead.

Cynder ducked low mid-flight, opening her mouth and blasting the dislodged beam with a streak of dark, shadow-glow flame, igniting it instantly. Figment's mouth was wide open throughout, only partly due to exertion from running, as the lit wood crashed and rolled, tumbling into the oncoming army of Rhynocs.

"Haha, great!" Figment whooped, then went lightheaded, saving his breath. Why had Blarion gone and imagined him up so thoroughly as to need to breathe?

"Which way?" Spyro bellowed, up ahead.

"Left!" Figment shouted; a doorway blowing apart followed after, confirming that Spyro had heard. The fire from the beam held off the horde from that direction, but another wave of screeching Rhynocs emerged from the right, narrowly missing Cynder and Figment as they tailed Spyro. "Straight ahead, now, and keep going!"

"Hah!" Spyro roared, whooping and cheering, between bashes and crashes. "This's so much easier, this way! I love it!"

"Is...he always l-like this?" Figment puffed, running as hard as he could.

"So far, thankfully!" Cynder answered, a dash of amusement peppering her focus.

"Right! I mean, RIGHT!"

Another crash, further up ahead. Cynder flipped around in the air and blew shadow flame into the pursuant masses, scattering them only for a few precious seconds.

"Use your fire, Figment!" she cried, readying another volley.

"I, ah, d-don't have any! I'm n-not some warrior dragon, I just, I help...B-Blarion in his lab, as his imaginary assistant!"

"Well, can't you imagine better?"

"I mean...I-I'm *made* of imagination, I-I'm not all powerful!"

"Try!"

The horde was closing in tight, pouring in, bridging the gaps Cynder's flames created.

"We're all back safe and sound!" Figment cried, answered only by the crazed roars of charging Rhynocs. "We're all safe and sound, and there's cookies—"

"Maybe imagine something more manageable!"

"Like what?"

"Anything that'd stop the wave!"

"B-but that'd take—"

At that, the side wall to the hallways shattered (in a now-familiar manner) as Crush barreled through; happily, the charge was directly into the horde, scattering the Rhynocs in a wave of abrupt, baffled, and extremely mutual anger.

"That'll work!" Cynder said as the pair followed Spyro's own path of carnage. "Good job!"

"I didn't—"

Spyro charged on into a large ballroom, just before another mass pummeled into his side, knocking his huge bulk to the side. He slammed against an aging pillar, cracking it, and by the time he shook off the shock, Gulp was charging again. The pillar blew into fragments as Spyro crashed through, locked into a grapple with the nearly-as-large beast.

"Spyro!" Cynder cried out, as she and Figment ran into the room.

Figment forced the ballroom door's haggard remains together as much as he could behind them as Cynder circled the air, gaining enough speed to hurl herself into Gulp's side. The dinosaur only paid for her troubles with an annoyed growl, whipping his tail around and nearly clocking her in the head. His weight stayed on Spyro's back, until his struggling forced all that bulk to grind over his damaged wing, making him roar in agony, and wobble lower to the floor.

"Get up!" Figment shouted, running nearer to the two giants. "You can handle him!"

"Wing!" Spyro groaned, gritting his teeth, one eye closed. "My wing!"

"Hold on," Cynder started, before Crush smashed through the opposing doorway and chased her off down the adjoining hallway, separating them.

Without thinking further, Figment bit his lip, then pulled a candy out of the bag; what was it? Green? Fine, fine!

Experiment number one, he told himself, as he drew dangerously close. Before Gulp could gather what was happening, Figment was already at Spyro's huge muzzle, helpfully lifting his jaw up.

"Whu," Spyro began, wide-eyed, before the green candy was in. In his intake, Spyro automatically swallowed, then blinked, as Figment backed away nervously. "What was—"

"Green!" Figment shouted, scurrying off, as Gulp finally noticed and thrashed his tail, trying to squash him with one hard blow. "It was green! Help me remember what it does!"

Spyro blinked again, then opened his eyes wide. The telltale rumble returned, angrily, until his insides were nearly shaking. Gulp rumbled back defiantly, thinking Spyro had growled some challenge, and he climbed further atop Spyro's prostrate form in a show of dominance. The show didn't last long.

Spyro's arms and chest and haunches quaked in unison as some unknowable power flooded them, making them twitch and spasm, before flexing tight. Spyro's pained grimace flipped into an unabashed grin as his flexed arms and legs started to bulge out, all over. His entire body seemed to breathe up bigger, stronger, his height surging up past 20 feet, then 21, then 22...only now, his bulk was swelling wild, billowing into thicker and broader definition, as though most of the height was redirecting to his ballooning muscles.

"Y...YYYYEESSSS," Spyro huffed, his teeth swelling bigger, his horns pushing out larger and longer, as Gulp started to look his foe over in mounting dismay. He too rose, riding the expanding mass as Spyro cleared 25 feet, his tail fattening with bulk, spreading further out across the dusty tiles.

"W...wow!" Figment gasped, his jaw duly slack. "Green...is power! Raw power!"

"IT...S-SURE IS!" Spyro cheered, unable to help but flex his muscles even harder, his eyes rolling back as his feral biceps blew up into boulders, his purple shoulders rolling with inflating girth. His scales stretched sweetly across growing mounds of might as his chest boomed out before him, spreading his yellow plating tighter to accommodate new waves of churning mass.

Gulp's feet were nearly as large as Figment, and now, suddenly, Spyro's paws could easily cover them, each one over four feet wide as he shuddered and ballooned to 30 feet, then 33, rising up higher and higher towards the vaulted ballroom ceiling. Gulp clutched fearfully at Spyro's backside, new plains of muscle dividing and swelling and surging hotly under him. Though his haunches billowed in size, it was his torso that boomed the biggest, the increasingly top-heavy dragon roaring in glee as he trembled even deeper, huffed, then rocketed *bigger*, blasting up to 37 feet, 38, 39...40!

"R...RUUUURUUH?"

"WH-WHAT'S THE M-MATTER, GULP?" Spyro laughed, his voice growing deeper, stronger, boom-booming out a verbal blast that shook the pillars around them. "TOO HARD TO SWALLOW?"

Gulp actually bothered to nod as he looked up. The dome at the center of the ceiling was getting uncomfortably close as Spyro relentlessly expanded. The overjoyed dragon snorted, shivered, and boomed even larger, to Gulp's terror, his swelling paws spreading over cracking tiles, his forearms bursting thicker than tree trunks, his biceps now so wide that Figment would have needed ship ropes just to measure their circumference. As he blew up past 43 feet, now over twice Gulp's size, Spyro licked his muzzle over, shook, and made great efforts to see where Figment was, as he surged past 45 feet, as big as a house. Bigger than the adult dragons. Bigger than he had ever dreamed. And he was still swelling!

"F-FIGMENT...HEH...T-THANKS! G-GO...HELP CYNDER! I GOT T-THIS!"

"Right!" Figment said, still wide-eyed and stunned. As he ran off, bag still in tow, he shouted one last thing back: "Again, that was green!"

In response, Figment could only hear Spyro laughing, a rolling thunderclap of amusement bouncing off of snapping pillars as his scaly muscles kept insistently, unstopably growing, and growing, and growing, and growing...

It wasn't hard to locate Cynder, as Figment had only to pursue the sounds of chaos echoing

down the hallway. In moments he turned a corner to help out, then regretted it bitterly.

"Figment, watch out!"

Cynder's words were nearly too rushed to process; it was only due to his small stature that Figment managed to avoid the crashing blow of Crush's club as the floor broke apart behind him, sending him into a roll. Taking advantage, Cynder dive bombed, struck Crush in the back, and sent the bellowing behemoth careening into the cracked floor he had created. He hit hard enough to snap it apart, sending him tumbling down though it in a rage, crashing with a quake down below.

"Thanks," Figment wheezed, dusting himself off. "Are you okay?"

"Ah," Cynder started, grunting, as she tried to right herself. "Not really. He swung and caught me on my side, and..." she moved her wings and growled miserably. "Hnn, he did enough damage. That attack sealed the deal, we're all grounded..."

"Oh, no, no," Figment groaned, rubbing worriedly at his horns. "None of us can fly? That's bad, that's bad...okay, then, we stick to using the throne room portal to escape. Uh, we can figure out getting to it, after we...oh! Come with me! Spyro's handling that Gulp monster, we had best help him out!"

"You want to get *closer* to that beast?" Cynder balked, cocking her head.

"Believe me, we're safer near Spyro, at this point," Figment chuckled. "I gave him another candy, you wouldn't believe how huge—"

Crush's club bashed up through the remains of the floor, sending them both tumbling down into the darkness. Figment and Cynder each slid down the angled segment of broken floor, tumbling into another section of the dungeon; as the smoke cleared, only a few cell bars down a row separated them from Crush, who was stuck in his own cell, smashing away at the bars, with gradual success.

"RUAAAAAAGH!"

"We can't keep doing this," Cynder coughed, righting herself yet again. "We'll be exhausted in short order. Ripto's just wearing us down with all this insanity and chasing."

They looked up, to see the cell they were trapped in. The only way out was at least fifteen feet North, where the opening in the floor-cum-ceiling was.

"We could climb out," Figment said, thinking quickly.

"Well, I can't fly, and you can't, and even stacked atop each other, we'd only clear maybe seven feet, tops...we can't get out like this!"

The bars several cells away snapped apart as Crush bulged his way into the neighboring cell, starting to work through it next. Wasting no further time, Figment bit his lip, fumbled through the bag, and withdrew another candy—a golden one, this time.

"Here! Quick!" Figment said, offering it to her. The Dragoness looked it over, clearly anxious.

"B-but we don't know what it—"

"No, but we know what *he'll* do!"

Cynder groaned, half in pain, and half in fear; but, ultimately, she closed her eyes, opened her maw, and let Figment pop the candy in. She rolled it around tacitly, then hummed approvingly.

"Delicious," she remarked, smiling a moment.

"I'm glad!" Figment said, nervously tittering, as the bars to the other cell bent further out against Crush's pushing bulk. "But ah, swallow, when you can, please!"

Cynder nodded rapidly, crunched it to bits in her jaws, and then swallowed several times. Within seconds the rumbling began inside her, making them both stare at her pink belly a moment, before she hiccuped, shook, then began to change. Where Figment expected perhaps a simple increase in size, something else happened—something more.

"Ooh," Cynder peeped, blushing, as she trembled and gasped.

Her forearms and paws shifted, then pushed outward, making Figment jump. They tensed, then straightened out, neatly snapping to articulation with a painless click, leveling out like...well, like Blarion's arms did. Like *human* arms. Cynder watched on with equal amazement as her feral hips widened out, making her teeter and thump down onto her rump, which bulged out into more clearly-divided cheeks, hefty yet soft, while her haunches pushed out into a set of wide, ample thighs; her paws lengthening out as well, the toes angling up and out as she formed defined heels and soles.

"W-what is this?" Cynder murmured, in complete astonishment, as her spine and backside curved into a feminine 'S', pushing her shoulder blades apart, her wings riding the change out, as her neck thickened some. Figment stared in astonishment, no longer noticing the way Crush broke through into the cell beside their own, snorting and snapping against the last wave of bars.

"Incredible," Figment said, watching on, as Cynder turned completely...*human*.

Well, it was nearly that. The dragoness had the figure of a grown female woman, sans the kind of frilly dresses they wore back in London...but it was still unmistakable. Though she retained her draconic head, horns and muzzle, she was otherwise what the books referred to as an *anthropomorphic*, like a man-beast from hieroglyphics of old. "How incredible!"

"I look so...different..." Cynder spoke, before the rumbling returned, interrupting.

She snorted and jounced, her newly-changed body beginning to do just like Spyro's, and expand. She sat there, her rump swelling bigger across the cell floor, wall chains jangling as her growing backside tousled them awake. Her shoulders and hips blew out wider still, her chest inflating out into two soft, smooth orbs as she looked herself over, then surged up, and up, and up.

Crush heaved and strained into the bars dividing their cells, the only ones remaining. They snapped partly and bent out, finally getting their full attention. Considering Cynder was now swelling up past those aforementioned seven feet, nearing 9, then 10, that took some doing.

"Figment, quick," Cynder said, even as she shuddered and groaned. "C-come here!"

"Right!" he answered, climbing up between her growing feet, as her calves and thickening thighs grew out on either side of him; her huge feet pushed against the bending cell bars, trying to push them back against Crush. In seconds, Figment felt Cynder's growing arms wrap protectively about him, hugging him into her large chest, feeling with a blush as they continued to balloon loudly and warmly into him.

"Hang on!" she roared, able to stand up and rise up out of the cell with ease.

At sixteen feet, her head cleared the opening in the broken floor above; at nineteen feet, Spyro's previous size, her shoulders bulged up into the open, then her chest, against which Figment desperately hugged. She leaned that same chest up onto the floor above, letting them continue to swell into a sort of flotation device, upon which Figment bounced off. He turned back, set the bag down, and used both tiny hands to help pull at Cynder's growing wrists, making her laugh, despite everything.

"Ah...thanks," she offered, though really the 23-foot female was climbing up and out entirely on her own power. Her head nearly brushed the ceiling above as she joined him, the remains of the floor creaking angrily, in time with Crush's roars down below.

"You look amazing!" Figment shouted, bolting back the way they had originally come, a few minutes prior. Cynder had to crawl on all fours, parodying her former feral state, as the two of them moved along the hallway.

"I...I *feel* amazing!" she added, smiling overhead. "That was gold, then?"

"It was! Taking a p-proper inventory!"

"Fine with me, as long as it gets us home free!"

By the time Figment reached the now-further-ruined ballroom, Cynder was struggling just to extricate herself from the doorway frame. Her shoulders grew and grew against it, her 30-foot body fighting to move, until her billowing rump and tail swelled up, creating enough pressure to blast her the rest of the way through. The frame shattered into a mess of busted stone and iron, but she made it in—though the door sure didn't. Her growth finally ceased at about 33 feet, enough to let Cynder stand mostly upright, her horns tapping the ceiling here and there.

"I don't see Spyro or Crush here," she sighed, dusting her thick hips off. "It sure is an adjustment, standing on two feet..."

"Given the castle structure, we have to be close to the throne room," Figment mused, looking about. "We're almost out! This way!"

The impacts of Cynder's clawed feet echoed off the tiles like distant thunder as they exited, spurring Figment's imagination to work further overtime. In all the fuss and trouble, he had arguably been too distracted to practice it any. Usually, it was for idea gathering and thinking through laboratory experiments, not for daring do and adventure. Truth be told, he has no idea how exactly it helped.

But what a thrill it was!

"Here!"

Figment remembered well enough to realize where he had led them. Ripto's throne sat unoccupied atop the central stairwell, tattered curtains barely hanging on behind it. The domed interior was empty for the moment, and as Cynder squeezed in past the door and joined him, a strange silence imposed.

"No sign of Spyro," Cynder rumbled. "Figment, where was the portal?"

"Found it!" Figment whooped, bounding over to the far end of the wall, where a large stone archway rested, inert. "It still looks to be sealed, I think...any idea how to activate it?"

Cynder thudded over heavily, knelt down low with a series of creaking scales, and looked it over with him.

"Well, we had similar kinds in my world," she sighed, thinking, "but I admit, they usually just...worked. Also, I hate to say it, but...there's just no way Spyro or I would fit, now."

For all his ingenuity, Figment suddenly could have kicked himself. Of course, they wouldn't fit. Of course, Spyro wouldn't have fit into the portal he'd been yanked through by Gulp, to begin with. The most obvious of variables, and he had looked right past them.

"I wouldn't fret over it, dragons!"

They grimaced, looked to one another, then turned to see Ripto emerging from behind his throne, smiling wickedly. Smugly, as well.

"I knew either the bag would be back here shortly, or you would. It was just a matter of—
WHOA!"

He finally opened his eyes and leapt back onto his throne, crawling defensively into it.

"What the...sh...she's huge!"

"That's right," Cynder retorted, rising to her full imposing height. Thirty-three feet of humanoid dragoness approached, shaking the throne room slightly as she towered over Ripto, over the stairwell, over the throne. "And I suggest you activate that portal for my friend, right now."

"B-but I couldn't leave you here!" Figment stammered, struck at the very thought.

"S-shut up!" Ripto snarled, taking more of a seat on his throne, in an attempt to de-cower as much as possible. "You two aren't going anywhere! Now, where's that rotten Spyro at?"

He brandished his wand threateningly, only for the entire throne room to quake in response. Even the diminutive dinosaur was caught off guard, his wand lowering, before Gulp came crashing through another doorway, bowling over the remaining Rhynoc horde, which came running in from the path Figment and Cynder had arrived from. The two met, throwing the horde into a scatter, just as the entire side wall next to Ripto's throne warped inward, in a singular swell of cracking pressure.

"What..."

Ripto's sentence was as destroyed as the wall as Spyro bulged through it, blowing stone and mortar and dust about. It was almost enough to obscure him, only Spyro was now too big to be completely obscured. Much, *much* too big. Over 100 feet of bulky, brawn-laden, purple muscle shoved in, paws the size of the castle's double-doors slamming the floor. Even on all fours, Spyro's horns bumped against the dome ceiling as he loomed large over the Rhynocs, over Gulp, over Cynder, over Figment, over Ripto. Spyro was bigger than everyone, by a landslide—and oh, did he already know it.

"THERE YOU ARE!" Spyro boom-spoke, grinning wide. "I WAS—CYNDER? WHOA!"

"Figment and I tried a gold one," she laughed, blushing a bit as Spyro towered over her, snuffling down curiously with an oversized muzzle. "But look at you! Y...you're immense!"

"SO, IT'S A GOOD DAY FOR US BOTH!" Spyro chuckled, winking cockily. "Figment, SERIOUSLY, YOU HAVE TO LEAVE ME SOME OF THOSE OTHER COLORS—"

"Enough chatter!" Ripto bellowed, or tried to, interjecting just the same. "I won't have this in my own home!"

"You probably took this place over, you parasite!" Cynder shot back, growling.

"So, it was a steal," Ripto huffed. "It's an open market!"

"YEAH, YEAH, AND WE'RE JUST RENOVATING," Spyro mocked, rolling his eyes, as he forced his full bulk destructively into the crowded throne room. "LOOK AT US, RIPTO. WE COULD FLICK YOU CLEAR ACROSS THE LAKE, LIKE THIS! WE TOOK OUT ALL THE TRASH YOU THREW AT US, SO WHAT CHANCE DO YOU THINK *YOU* HAVE?"

"Oh, I don't know," Ripto mused, slipping into a wide, toothy grin. He pulled out a small pink orb, and held it where they could all see. "Why don't we find out, together?"

Figment had been tinkering and poking and prodding at the portal, throughout. When he looked up and saw the object Ripto held, he went pale.

"Oh, Margaret," he gulped. At his small size, only Cynder was close enough to notice.

"Don't tell me," she started.

"I...may have dropped a candy in all the fracas," Figment peeped, suddenly sheepish.

Before anyone could offer anything else, and before Spyro could move his musclebound bulk with any kind of appropriate speed, Ripto swallowed the candy whole.

"Heh! I've been blasting this thing with all the magic I could manage, while you were running around like idiots. I already know enough to know what this stuff does, on its own," Ripto chuckled, as the little dinosaur began to rumble deep inside. "Enough to know that you all better r...ru...OOH!"

Immediately, the tiny dinosaur's belly bulged out, stretching and catching tight against his dapper clothing and cloak. His entire body ballooned larger, wider, inflating against his garbs, which held, but began to strain out and rip, then tear, letting pockets of swelling scales bulge forth. His growls deepened with a dark glee as he trembled, then ballooned even bigger, his expanding backside overfilling the confines of his throne as it warped against more and more inflating girth. His head and arms rose as his clothing popped apart, splitting, then splitting again, and again, several bulges of scaly bulk rejoining into one ever-growing mass as it all tore away, letting him balloon up to 10 feet in size.

“YES...”

With another rough shudder Ripto grunted and billowed up all the way to 20, 30, 40 feet, instantly, pouring over his cracking throne, crushing it, overflowing the stairwell, sagging out over the sides as his entire body blimped into a taut, surging sphere. In less than a few seconds' time, not enough to really react against, he was nearing 50 feet, and the snapping stairs shattered and broke away, leaving Ripto to tumble down with a heavy slam into the floor, shaking the already-taxed throne room. The space his fall afforded was swallowed up as Ripto's inflation didn't stop—but actually *sped up*.

"He's swelling up like a hot air balloon!" Figment gasped, backing away.

"GUESS WE KNOW WHAT PINK DOES," Spyro rumbled, as Ripto's growth began to stubbornly crowd up tight against his huge purple muscles. "HEY, GET YOUR OWN SPACE!"

"That...is exactly...WHAT I'LL DO!" Ripto cackled, the mad dinosaur shaking all over, then erupting massively larger!

His sides boomed out into both walls, pushing even the mighty Spyro back, as Ripto greedily swelled onward, pumping up to 100 feet, then kept growing, until Cynder, Spyro and Figment were all pressed against it. The pressure mounted rapidly as Ripto's head and shoulders billowed up, up into the peak of the dome interior, blowing endlessly up into it.

"SO BIG," he bellowed, overtaken with joy. "FINALLY...I-I'M SO...BIG!"

The entirety of the throne room exploded outward as Ripto swelled beyond it, over 200 feet high and 400 feet around. Cynder felt Figment climbing onto her back, and she in turn began to scale Ripto's expanding body, feeling and hearing every stretch as the formerly-tiny dinosaur loomed higher. More and more sections of the castle snapped and shattered and blew apart as he simply let himself grow and grow, smothering and smashing more and more, crushing whole ramparts, toppling rickety towers, blowing up past 300 feet high, then 400!

"I'M BIGGER...THAN YOU...SPYRO! MUCH BIGGER! THIS...IS HOW...IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE! HAHA! LET'S SEE YOU...CALL ME...SHORTY...NOW!"

"UGH, HE'S LOST IT," Spyro growled, the massive bulk-dragon using his impossible muscle to hug Ripto's belly, though even he was only a fourth of his size, and getting comparatively smaller by the second. He was merely mighty enough to look good, struggling against the wall of scales.

"The portal was in there!" Figment shouted, making Cynder look back to him over her gigantic shoulder and wing. "What do we do now?"

"Do you still have the bag, Figment?" she asked, her huge, silky voice barely able to compete with the sound of Ripto's ceaseless swelling.

"Y-yes!"

"Give me another one, quick!"

"R-right!"

He fumbled around in his bag with one hand, using the other to hold onto Cynder, while he bit the top flap of the bag, to hold onto it. He pulled out a blue candy, a deep, deep-dark shade of blue, darker by far than the others he had seen, on the top of the pile.

"Blue!" he shouted, or tried to, given how his mouth was occupied.

"What?" Cynder bellowed, trying to hear, as Ripto swelled bigger, now as big as half the entire castle, blowing through walls, cracking the firmament around the lava lake, his lower curves pushing relentlessly against the entirety of the outer walls.

"BLUE! It's a blue one!"

"Okay, just give it to me! Hurry!"

A tremendous hand rose high, and then slammed down onto all that stretched balloon-girth, big enough to snatch Cynder up completely. She roared in shock as she was hefted high, Figment, the bag and the blue candy all falling down and thumping with a drum-bounce on Ripto's inflated belly. He scrambled to catch the sliding bag, still holding the dark blue orb, and looking up along with a frightened Spyro to see Ripto looming high above, clutching Cynder in one still-growing hand.

"Y-YOU LET HER GO!" Spyro bellowed, shaking Ripto's bulk.

"MAKE ME, WIMP!" the 600-foot dinosaur laughed, shaking all over yet again, before ballooning even *bigger*, still.

The angered Spyro was already scaling up Ripto's vast body, snarling openly. Still unable to fly, he instead climbed closer, welled up, and blasted a sheet of fire that would shame the greatest of dragons, incinerating the upper half of Ripto's growing body. There was clearly pain enough, because Ripto was bellowing in fury, but at 700 staggering feet, even Spyro found himself pulling back as a colossal fist bore down on him, crushing him down into the dinosaur's own belly.

"Spyro!" Cynder yelled, blasting Ripto again and again with her own shadow fire.

"S-STOP THAT!" Ripto roared, angrily stretching and booming up to 800 feet high, and 1,200 feet around. His mass overloaded the entire castle's parameters, crushing it as it poured up over the cracking walls, and all Figment could do was gawk in abject, childlike fear.

"Oh, no, oh no," he moaned, looking back and forth between the three great giants he had helped create. "What...what do I do!?"

He looked back and forth, forth and back, then caught sight of the candy he was holding. He blinked, processing things, before steeling himself. This was it.

Right! Warrior or not, he could do this. It didn't even take any thought!

He did the thing he always did, when stressed or tired or anxious: he had a piece of candy. And, as he gulped it down, and a rumble of his very own began to rise up inside, he found it as helpful to his disposition as ever. More so, in fact.

Figment's little body trembled, and trembled deep, until his teeth chattered. No amount of idle thought, no fits of imagination could have matched the rush, when it hit.

The sensation of growth burst up, first in a kind of steady, pleasant stretching, as might after waking up...only it kept going, and going, until he could feel every cartoonish scale, every spike, horn, wing, claw, every limb continue to push out further and further, regardless of his input. His muzzle pushed out ahead as his view rose higher, and higher, his feet swelling over Ripto's huge, stretched scales, his heels riding and thumping over the crevices where each one met.

"W-whoa," he groaned, wobbling from the shift in perspective, as he blew up to 10 feet, rumbled again, closed his eyes, then swelled up to 20 feet; the trembling wasn't slowing down!

He grit his jaw as he bulged again, blowing up to 30 feet, his fingers thickening, his claws getting a bit longer, his neck stretching out as he continuously swelled, shuddering and surging bigger and bigger, taking up more and more space on Ripto, even as the massive villain boomed up to a final, whopping, fantastic 1,000 feet in height! The entire island on which the castle once stood was occupied only by him! Yet, whereas Ripto finally stopped, the 90-foot tall Figment was only getting started...

"HOW ABOUT THAT, DRAGON?" Ripto sneered, so big that he was able to hoist Spyro's muscled body up with one hand. "WHAT'S ALL THAT BULK GOING TO DO FOR YOU, NOW?"

"Y-YOU LOUSY..." Spyro growled, thrashing around. For what it was worth, Spyro had swollen into such a powerhouse that even the larger Ripto found himself struggling just a bit to keep hold of that much muscle. "DON'T YOU HURT HER!"

"HER?" Ripto repeated, grinning. "WHY, WOULD THAT BOTHER YOU? I HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN YOU TWO TOGETHER, BEFORE? WHAT DO YOU CARE?"

"He's too strong," Cynder grunted, starting to exhaust her fire. "I-I can't even reach him!"

"WELL, I CAN REACH YOU FINE, 'HER!'" Ripto roared, squeezing in on her humanoid body with his massive fist, making her cry out. Spyro redoubled his efforts, so powerful that even at 100 feet, a tenth of Ripto's height, he started to successfully force the giant's thick fingers apart and loosen his grip. "W...HEY! OH, NO, YOU DON'T!"

Ripto's grip did some redoubling of its own, squeezing in, and Spyro only pushed even harder, his biceps and chest and shoulders booming larger from pure strain. Spyro snorted, flexing harder, still, and his bulk swelled out even larger, for it; though his height didn't increase, he had blown up from some feral equivalent of a bodybuilder, into an outright hulk, and even Ripto was losing ground against that much raw, seething power.

"I...SAID...LET...H-HER...GOOOOO!"

"NO...NO!"

Ripto's size was greater, but his physical strength paled in comparison, and it became more and more obvious as Spyro forced his monstrously big hand open, and wrestled loose. He thudded down on Ripto's enormous belly, claws out, teeth bared, and horns forward, readying a charge.

"RELEASE HER, OR I'LL BASH YOU EVEN UGLIER!"

"PAH! I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM DRAGONS!" Ripto roared, glowering, knitting his massive brow up overhead. "YOU STILL CAN'T DO THAT KIND OF DAMAGE, AT THAT SIZE, YOU LITTLE PUNK, AND YOU KNOW IT!"

"NO..."

The voice that answered made all three giants pause, Spyro included.

"BUT I CAN!"

An absolutely humongous clawed hand rose up over Ripto's belly, slamming down next to Spyro, so big that it shook even him. Another slammed down on the other side, before Ripto, Cynder and Spyro all saw Figment's colossal head and thick neck rising up, up into the night skies. With a last shuddering bulge of growth, Figment blew up to a mighty 500 feet, half Ripto's vast size. While it wasn't equal to him, it proved more than enough.

"WHAT THE—"

Ripto's confused gasps were cut short as Figment grabbed both the dinosaur's huge hands at the wrist, holding them fast. Spyro grinned, then bolted, using his godly legs to propel himself up into a leap and tackling Cynder out of Ripto's open hand.

"HEY! NO, WAIT, YOU...YOU STOPPIT!"

Figment was plenty-big enough to hold Ripto in place, his huge feet propped against the lower curves of the dinosaur's belly. Spyro reappeared from behind Ripto's gigantic head and neck, hugging Cynder tight, before gently letting her down onto Ripto's scales. Both of them bounded over, having to look up at Figment, their faces lit up with victory and relief.

"HAHA, WOW, FIGMENT!" Spyro boomed happily, wagging an insanely powerful tail.
"THAT WAS AMAZING! YOU'RE HUGE!"

"Haha, well played!" Cynder cheered, clapping her lady-like hands, all as Ripto snorted and struggled against Figment's enlarged grip. "So, that's what blue does!"

"HEE!" Figment chuckled, so big that it shook against Ripto with a light quake. "LOOKS LIKE I JUST GOT PLAIN-JANE *BIGGER*, INDEED!"

"Works for us! So, what now?" Cynder rightly asked, looking out over the lava at the crater and mountains beyond. "We have him subdued, but the portal is probably crushed, all the way under-bulk. Any ideas where the nearest one is, that we can use?"

"YEAH," Spyro nodded, grinning down at her. "THERE'S ANOTHER EXIT OUT OF HERE, ACROSS THE LAKE. FIGMENT, YOU CAN'T..."

All three of them realized it, at once.

"YOU...YOU'RE TOO BIG. WE'RE ALL TOO BIG," Spyro finished, huffing a big blast of air as the catch settled in. "THERE'S NO WAY EVEN CYNDER COULD FIT IN ONE, NOW, AND THE TWO OF US? FORGET IT..."

"HAH!" Ripto snarled, grinning wide. "STUCK HERE, EH? THAT'S WHAT YOU GET! AND I SWEAR, THE MINUTE YOU LET ME LOOSE, I'LL CRUSH YOU ALL!"

"He has a point," Cynder grumbled, folding her arms up under her chest. At last, even Spyro noticed, and gulped. "We must have some sort of option left. Figment, was there anything you can tell us about the portal that brought you here, in the first place? Was it the same?"

Figment thought carefully, cocking his head some, as he towered above them both.

"WELL, NO, NOT EXACTLY," he replied, narrowing his big eyes, "I DIDN'T SEE WHAT I CAME OUT OF...BUT I CAN TELL YOU, THE PORTAL IN THE LABORATORY, THAT WASN'T QUITE THE SAME AS THE ONES HERE..."

"MEANING, YOU DIDN'T USE OUR WORLD'S PORTALS TO GET HERE," Spyro reasoned, his tail whipping around. "WHICH MEANS, THERE WAS SOME OTHER WAY!"

"OH, BLAH BLAH," Ripto sourly interjected, making all three dragons cut him a withering glare. Even the huge dinosaur withered against it.

"So, if there're portals all their own, where would we find another one?" Cynder wondered. "If there're even any others around?"

"THINK POSITIVE," Figment chirped, smiling. "THAT'S HOW I HELP FIX THINGS IN THE LAB, I IMAGINE IT CAN'T HURT HERE—"

"Imagine!" Cynder said, getting used enough to her new body to snap her fingers. "Right! Figment, just try and imagine a portal! One big enough for you! Big enough for us all, maybe!"

Ripto listened on, his reptilian brow furrowed in compounding bafflement.

"OH, BUT...THAT DOESN'T WORK LIKE YOU THOUGHT IT DID," Figment muttered, blushing up high overhead. "I DON'T REALLY USE MY IMAGINATION QUITE LIKE THAT!"

"WELL, TRY IT ANYWAY, PAL!" Spyro offered, shrugging his massive shoulders. "WHAT COULD IT HURT?"

Figment's optimism swelled, filling his huge self rapidly, crushing in against his doubts.

"I...SUPPOSE IT WOULDN'T. ER, I...I IMAGINE!"

At that, the huge Figment closed his eyes and wondered; he wondered just what a portal that big would look like. Would it form in the air, free-floating? The machine was still at the lab, so it would likely have to operate without a framework, or any physical parameters...

The air around them grew heavy and sharp, as a single bolt of energy snapped across the sky, then another, flickering like lights around them. Even Ripto gave a start.

"HEY, YEAH," Spyro started, looking around.

"What color would it be, Figment?" Cynder asked, pushing him to think harder.

"BLUE," he replied, not needing to think on it. More electricity filled the skies around them, crackling and building. For a moment, nothing more happened, and Figment closed his eyes and thought even harder. "BLUE, WITH A WHITE BORDER...SPARKING AND SPIRALING, LIKE A WHIRLPOOL OF ENERGY...YES, THAT WAS IT! THAT WAS HOW IT LOOKED!"

Like some long-atrophied muscle, Figment's imagination flexed, straining deep. The sparks reappeared all around, coalescing into a small flash of light ahead of them.

"It's working," Cynder hollered, wagging her tail along with Spyro. "It would have to be massive, wouldn't it? A great big disc!"

"OH, IT SURELY WOULD," Figment replied, his eyes still shut. "THE CIRCUMFERENCE ALONE WOULD NEED TO BE HUGE, TO FIT US ALL..."

The burst of light swelled and flattened, thinning into a growing blue vortex, very near to the island that Ripto had outgrown. It continually expanded, wider and wider and wider, until it was every bit as large as the former-landmass, wherein Figment opened his eyes, and gasped.

"I...I DID IT? I REALLY DID IT!"

"THAT IMAGINATION IS SOME SERIOUS FIREPOWER," Spyro said, openly impressed. "IMAGINE IF HIS IMAGINATION WAS AT FULL-POWER!"

"He'd be...practically a god, Spyro, let's not mention that, and keep things stable, for now, okay? It looks like this is totally new to him, too, let's not push him too hard..."

"R-RIGHT," Spyro said, blushing a bit, as thoughts of how mighty his new buddy would be, in such a realized state.

"IT'S ALL SET!" Figment thundered, smiling proudly. "WE JUST NEED TO GET OUT TOWARDS IT, SOMEHOW!"

The three giants looked to the lake beyond, then looked at Ripto. The supergiant dinosaur saw them, and grimaced.

"...WHAT."

Figment's massive paws kicked off of the edge of the island, and Ripto howled angrily as his scaled balloon of a body drifted onto the lava lake, immediately smoking on contact.

"GAHHHHHH! AH, H-HOT! HOT! HOT!"

"DON'T BE A WIMP, SHORTY," Spyro dug, grinning smugly.

Ripto was too busy hollering and writhing to engage in banter of any quality as the three dragons sailed across the lake, using the living pontoon that he had swollen so willingly into.

"SO, WE'LL BE SENT BACK TO STONE HILL, AND YOU'LL BE BACK HOME, RIGHT?" Spyro finally asked, as they drifted nearer and nearer to the vast portal.

"I IMAGINE SO," Figment chuckled, thumping his wagging tail against Ripto's lower belly. "I SUPPOSE THAT MEANS THIS IS GOODBYE..."

There was a brief and powerful quiet. It had been a space of hours, but enough adventure had passed in that short period for a hundred years' worth of fireside stories and books. More than enough for comrades.

"YEAH," Spyro managed, looking down. "HEY, IT WAS SURE SOMETHING, WASN'T IT?"

Cynder snickered, already starting to laugh.

"It was ridiculous, is what."

"HEY, IT WAS WORTH IT. LOOK AT ME! GEEZE, CYNDER, L-LOOK AT YOU..."

"Do you like it?" she asked, earnestly.

"YES," both dragons answered, tidily in sync.

"HAH. SO, I, UH," Figment started, his smile going lopsided. "I THINK...BLARION, ER, BLAIR...HE'S BEEN MY CREATOR, AND MY FRIEND, SO LONG AS I'VE BEEN AROUND. BUT, I DON'T THINK I'VE HAD MANY OTHER...*FRIENDS*...SO, HEH..."

"YEAH," Spyro said, nodding. The nod said the most. It said *everything*.

Cynder beamed brightly, and nodded too.

"Yeah."

"MAYBE I'LL LINGER AGAIN, SOMETIME, YES?" Figment supposed, as they drifted on Ripto, right into the portal. Just as they entered in together, Spyro asked one more thing:

"HEY, NO, WAIT...WILL WE STAY THIS BIG?"

Before Figment could even imagine a proper answer, they all disappeared.

The disc closed, leaving only a few crackling bolts of blue in the otherwise still sky, then nothing at all. All that remained were the ruins of some old dusty castle, a horde of knocked-out Rhynocs, and Crush and Gulp, both of whom stared up in mute wonder at what had come before.

All that aside...it had been a pretty quiet night.

3.

Anywhere. *Anywhere at all.*

It could have been some frigid tundra, some barren and endless wasteland that welcomed Figment next. It could have been the bowels of perdition, some ancient underwater ruin, or some alien realm unto which one might be lost forever. Despite the surreal rush of power his gigantification granted, with all its accompanying scientific fascination, at the moment of passage between portals, all Figment could think of was home.

The notion dovetailed into disappointment when he opened his eyes not to Blair's library, but instead a vast wilderness, one so sprawling that even the gigantic dragon felt swallowed by it. Having exited Spyro's world at some 500 feet tall, Figment came out the other side figuring it would be easy to suss a few geographical markers, any familiar structure by which he could measure himself.

Such quantification of the self usually involved tables, chairs, boxes and doorways; having to look *down* to find treetops and boulders was every bit as foreign as the world which he was now in. His overgrown optimism butted against the frustration, but won out, gradually.

"Bother. This certainly doesn't look like London. Okay, well, let's see," Figment murmured, shaking his head a few times, to get the residual lag out of it. "Markers, markers..."

Alright, there were certainly woods about, lots and lots and *lots* of woods. The canopies of innumerable trees mingling about his ankles, and from observation, they were a common (and rather tall) species. Beyond the woodlands lay rolling hills and slate mountains, placing the giant dragon in what must have been an entirely untouched region of...*wherever he was*. Was it still the same planet, even? The same time?

"Oh!"

He perked up at last, as the thought chugged in on a late train. He patted his enlarged scales over worriedly, before opening what he realized had been a closed fist; now opened, he saw the candy bag safely ensconced, therein, and sighed loudly.

"Whew! Must have been holding tight, on reflex..."

He thought for a moment, then looked back at the bag, puzzled. Had he been holding it at normal size, it would have been about half his size...and if normal-him was on his palm, at his current size...then he would have been much smaller, in a palm that big, so...why?

The math came quickly; when he finished, Figment looked himself over, checking, comparing.

"I...I'm smaller! Er, well, not as big as I was, at least...but how?"

Roughly 250 feet, half the size he had swollen up to before entering the portal. That was the end of the equation, and no lie. He looked to the trees, and they agreed.

"Alright, think," he hummed, running his free hand along his huge horns. "Let's analyze the story, so far: I was sucked into a portal, wound up in another world...I didn't shrink when I went through the first one...I was able to imagine a bigger portal, with *considerable* effort...but going through the bigger one removed a portion of my size...the bag didn't shrink, relative to the trees and rocks down there, so it was only me that was affected...how fascinating! Heh! And I thought I'd have a lot to tell Blair, back at the lab, in the last world!"

"This isn't London?"

A known voice interjected, smaller and lighter—but still known. Figment proved more than big enough to shake the terrain when he did a small leap of surprise, and turned around. His jaw dropped, and whether it was out of dismay or joy...well, who was to say.

"Spryo?" Figment gasped, looking down at the feral dragon. "What...I thought you would have...you didn't return to your realm, through the portal?"

Spyro looked up at the towering Figment, and right away, Figment noticed it: he had diminished in size, too. Compared to his somewhat-shrunken self, Spyro must have been, what...50 feet tall, at the horns? He remained feral, and his swollen-out muscles were certainly unaltered, but now that made two of them lessened. Finally, the smaller purple dragon looked the area over, then cocked his head.

"I...don't know this place," he began, raising one brow. "So, I guess not! Looks like we're traveling buddies, after all!"

"I need a moment to think, since we're both here. Now, a portal of that size...must have taken more energy to create," Figment thought aloud, as Spyro's confusion persisted. "We both lost a chunk of our size...maybe it's like a passage fee, a tollway-tax, or portal fuel of some sort?"

"It costs us *size* to travel?" Spyro scoffed, blinking as indignantly as possible (which, it turned out, was very doable for him). "Nuts to that! I'll just use my wings!"

He flapped them a few solid times, then chuckled.

"Hey...hey, yeah! Figment, check it out! My wings are better! They actually feel great!"

Figment loomed further down over his new friend, investigating. Spyro might have been intimidated, were he not busy showing off.

"I'll be! It healed you, as well!" Figment replied, his tremendous tail stirring into a wag. "Interesting! If I'm correct, then...whatever portal we need, I can imagine, if I concentrate enough...it's untested, but the next portal we go through, I can see if my theories are correct or not!"

"The next portal?" Spyro repeated, as if tasting something foreign. He wasn't sure he liked it. "You mean, the portal *back*, right? I'm not just leaving my home and poor Sparx behind, here!"

"Well, heh, I...didn't land where I imagined, which means...I likely have no control over the destination. Only the means to traverse them! At least, for now."

"So, the more we travel, the *further* from home we all could be getting?"

"Well...we don't know for sure, yet. But let's not get discouraged, yes? All of us can—wait, where's Cynder? Where's Ripto?"

The pair looked about again, this time seriously. The valley remained quiet, with nary a giant humanoid dragoness nor a billowed-out balloon of an evil dinosaur in sight.

"That's certainly something to watch out for," Figment groaned, biting his lip. "We didn't all land in the same location, it seems."

"So...we find them, then," Spyro started, leaning in like a big brawny cat, until his back popped. "We can scout better from the air. Can you fly, Figment?"

The bigger dragon hummed thoughtfully, and flapped his wings several times—but the sheer weight of his enlarged bulk kept him pinned to the ground, and pinned fast. He snorted, then shook his head with an embarrassed grin.

"I don't think so. I'm likely much too heavy to maintain any substantive lift."

"So, no."

"Yes. Er, no."

Spyro nodded, then started his own attempt at flight; for all his muscle and power, it actually proved much harder than usual for him to get airborne, and by the time he was, he could only get about as high up as Figment's head.

"Oof, o-okay," he puffed, clearly struggling, "I can do it...but I'm not used to being this heavy! Whew! Okay, this'll take some practice."

"If you tire out, then just climb up on me, yes?" Figment offered. Spyro huffed as he hovered awkwardly in place, though he was smiling.

"Heh...appreciate it! So, uh...which...whew, which way?"

Figment thudded around, uncertain, pounding out a huge circle as he investigated. He squinted, then gasped, and pointed far to the West. In his world, it would have been the West, given the Sun's position, so that's what he went with.

"There! A castle!"

"Oh, no, not another one," Spyro moaned.

"It's much...well, okay, it's still a bit rough looking," Figment corrected, squinting longer. "It looks in better shape than Ripto's lair...but it's covered in something..."

Indeed, the entire structure seemed marred, somehow, as though scribbled over in black ink, thin messes tangling about it, covering and clinging. *Ivy? Thorns?*

"They should really fire their gardener," Spyro snarked, drawing Figment's attention.

"You can see that well from here?"

"Sure, well enough. Those are thorns, tons of them, like a whole forest of them. Are you sure you wanna go there, of all places? I think we lucked out, here, and wound up in a way nicer area. Besides, while I could see Ripto liking it, why would Cynder willingly go somewhere so miserable?"

"Fair point, but...we really should talk to someone, and someone likely lives there...Let's at least head that way and see if anyone knows more about where we are. We can always ask if anyone's seen any other dragons about!"

"Beats standing here."

It took five minutes of practice before Spyro gave up trying to fly any further, and gladly landed on Figment's colossal shoulder. The oddity of having a giant perched on *his* shoulder mingled with his efforts to step as gently, as politely forward as imaginable. With clawed feet the size of small houses, it was more of a chore than Figment was mentally prepared for, giving him yet another plate to balance on a figurative stick.

Each footfall sent the land into a light shake, the vibrations tickling back up under his feet with every impact. The canopies below wobbled and swayed, not quite violently, but noticeably enough.

"It's a little strange," Spyro started, lying draped over Figment's shoulder, "you'd think there would be a bunch of critters running away, with all the disturbance, but there's nothing. Nobody."

The moment he said it, it lodged in Figment's brain, unmovable.

"You're right," he muttered, as the distance between themselves and the castle dwindled with each booming step. "The whole region feels...deserted, doesn't it?"

"Bet you it's tied to whatever went wrong in that creepy castle."

"Bet you're right—"

Figment's hefty thuds slowed, then stopped, prompting Spyro to look up at him.

"Do you hear that?" he asked. Spyro's mouth was already open to ask why they had paused, but when he closed it again and listened, he did hear it. Faint as it was, he heard it.

"Yeah, what is that? Is it...crying?"

"I didn't think our hearing was that able, especially from up here," Figment added, his brows knit in bafflement. "Something would have to be closer to us that we realize, or...fairly big."

The nearer to the castle they drew, the more pronounced the low sobbing became.

"It's got to be from there," Figment said.

"What a shock."

Up close, the castle stood much taller than either of them originally grasped; its parapets and spires stretched to the skies, majestic and imposing, several times taller than even Figment. Given its true scale, it was less of a surprise that whatever they were hearing should be harder to spot against it. Yet, what did clear the other side of the castle's center, was.

It wasn't Cynder, or Ripto, but another dragon. And it was definitely crying.

Both males knew the curves indicative of their better halves, and that coupled with the tone of the cries spoke to the female persuasion. Great clawed hands covered her muzzle as she wept, leaving only her curved horns and jaw fins exposed. The majority of her feral body was a polished ebony pitch, dark violet plates cresting up her belly and chest, matching the sails of her otherwise-black wings. On casual inspection, she must have been roughly 30 feet tall, more than enough to have put fear in either of the males, at prior size. As it stood (not to mention as Figment stood), she could have been hugged up like a scaly teddy bear. Seeing her in such a low state, that was all Figment wanted to do.

"Excuse me," he spoke, as lightly as possible.

The dragoness started, wide eyes glowing green as she spun on them, nearly tumbling off of the thorn-tangled castle's center court.

"Ah!" she shrieked, backing away. "Mercy me, a giant!"

"Oh, goodness, I do apologize," Figment stammered, rebuilding the matchstick ruins of whatever he had meant to say. "Sorry to startle you! Ah, we heard you crying, my friend and I, and we're a bit new to the region..."

"I've never seen...*anything* as big as you," she continued, openly eyeing Figment up and down. "Incredible! Where do you come from, that you could grow to such a scale?"

"You were crying," Spyro interrupted, bluntly. "What's wrong?"

"Oh," the dragoness sighed, letting out one last residual sob. "I suffer from a curse, is what, and also why. A foul enchantment, crafted by forces that wish to undo this once-great kingdom. Pray, were you both afflicted, as well?"

Spyro and Figment exchanged looks, and Spyro rode the wave of motion that came from the larger dragon's slight shrug.

"I...don't think so, no," Figment replied. "You look alright, to me, by dragon standards."

"But therein is the rub," she groaned, motioning over herself with her huge hands. "I have been cursed with this form, altered darkly. Altered...by three vengeful fairies! The failure of the royal court to invite them to the reveal of the newborn princess...it was too severe a dishonor, and they lashed out by cursing the princess, and the kingdom itself. Upon her young adulthood, the princess Aurora pricked her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel; the curse lay under threat of death to her, but when I used my power as the court magician to lessen its blow, to render her death but a deep sleep...the fairies countered, by transforming me, so."

"I *told* you!" Spyro whispered sharply. Figment put up a massive hand to him, staying, as the dragoness continued on:

"Still, the princess Aurora sleeps, imprisoned in this castle. Even with my new form, I cannot clear the bramble of thorns away. The kingdom, its people, the animals, all slumber. I alone am left, tortured, destined to remain a powerless protector. Every time I hack and burn the thorns, I grow more tired and worn-out, while they grow back to full insult. I simply have no more left to give."

"Oh, no," Figment said, his voice heavy. "How awful!"

"Where are the fairies now?" Spyro asked.

"They remain hidden, where I cannot hope to retaliate against them. Were I able, I would turn the flames they beset me with back upon them!"

"Fair," Spyro continued. "Sorry to cut in, but have you seen another dragoness around—"

"Their agent!" the dragoness hissed, her eyes flaring brighter. "They summoned her through a great disc in the skies, several hours hence! She did their bidding, and attacked me! The cowardly fiend fled when I defended myself—who knows where she may lurk now? I'd wager, the same place those foul enchanters hide!"

"Whoa, hold up," Spyro interrupted, glaring. "Attacked?"

"It has to be her," Figment murmured to him, as quietly as his gigantic size allowed.

"No way," Spyro snorted, offended. "Look, I think we both know that isn't how Cynder would act, especially just arriving. I know it hasn't been a lifetime, but we've known her long enough!"

"Agreed, but...she's corroborating things only we would know..."

"I still say no. It hasn't been long, but I *trust* her, like I trust you. Do you trust me?"

"Absolutely."

"Then I call *bunk*."

By the time the exchange was over, the dragoness had finished her last bit of weeping, and was looking up imploringly at the both of them.

"Would you help me?" she asked, at length. "I'm sorry to ask and burden you so, but...the fairies don't know you, and you might be able to beseech them to lift the curse."

"What if they say no?" Figment asked.

"Then they would need to be defeated," came the answer, quickly.

"Ah, I see," Figment replied. "Where did you see the dragoness go, after your confrontation?"

"To the East."

She pointed a dark claw out beyond the castle, far into the sprawling woodlands, which vanished between two tall, gate-like mountaintops. Spyro made to talk, when Figment got there first:

"We would be happy to help! Count on us, Miss..."

"Alas," she moaned, hanging her head, curving her lengthy neck, "I cannot recall my own name anymore. But you could call me a *friend*, for now. Perhaps, upon lifting the curse, I might remember."

Figment was already moving to the East (his understanding of geography in his own world had proven correct) with a series of heavy steps. Spyro fidgeted openly, but stayed quiet a moment or two longer, as Figment nodded and waved her off.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" she cheered, waving back from between parapets, as they marched heroically into the forests. "I shall not forget this!"

When they cleared a large slope and lost sight of both her and the castle, Spyro let loose:

"What are we doing?" he balked, cocking his head. "Figment, you don't seriously believe her—even if she's not a bad guy, she isn't telling us everything. It's pretty obvious."

"Indeed," Figment soothed, smiling. "But it's the best chance at finding Cynder, and getting to the bottom of all this. Besides, even if I manage another portal right this minute, we couldn't leave without her...or I suppose, Ripto..."

"Oh, buddy, you can leave him," Spyro sneered. "I wonder where he even is. If he lost the same amount of size going through the portal, like the rest of us, then he would still be pretty big. Easy to spot, you know?"

"Exactly, sound reasoning. You know, you would be fun to work with, in the lab."

"Hah, you think so?"

"Why not?" Figment laughed, lightening the mood every time it sagged, between booming footfalls over snapping trees and jittering rocks. "I love Blair, er, Blarion...but I wouldn't hate having a fellow dragon around, as...well, a friend. It's pretty much all humans, back in London."

"I dunno," Spyro thought, though his tail wagged back and forth, sweeping across Figment's

scales. "I wouldn't want to be cooped up too long, no offense. I bet this is your first real adventure."

"Well, my first, without Blair."

"Don't get a big head or anything, but you're handling yourself pretty good!"

"You think so? The rest of me got big enough."

"Hey, even small, I've had loads of adventures. I'm fine with pulling another, plus-sized!"

"I guess we both spent our lives being little. It certainly is different. Feels good being big, but strange, too. I'm slower and heavier, and everything looks so different from up...*wait a minute!*"

"What?"

"Should have considered it earlier, goodness. We're both so high up, now...those fairies wouldn't be silly enough to hide way up in the open, they would be hidden...by..."

"Trees," Spyro finished, looking out anxiously over Figment's bulk. "Great. We managed to overlook the obvious. Should I climb down and check the forests? I can actually peek below the canopy, at my size..."

"Good idea...I'll walk with you, and check for any signs, over the treeline."

"You got it!"

Surprisingly, Spyro alighted with such grace that he hardly made a dent, landing among the trees. Right away, his muzzle vanished with a series of small snaps and bending trunks as he began peeking down underneath, searching about. Ready to do his own part, Figment scanned the skies over, then the farther reaches of the landscape. They had neared the entry between the mountains, and the valley between them sank into unknowable darkness, hidden from the sunlight, casting both giants in shadow and silence.

Either they were hiding in the woods, the valley beyond, or underground; that meant to look for smoke, candlelight, or some opening in the earth, some cavern or pit. At Cynder's size (were she also shrunken down), traveling far enough away would have proven difficult, meaning she shouldn't have had a lot of time to have gotten far. On the other paw, she had a better chance at flying...

"Where...would they be, that a flying dragon couldn't find them?" he wondered, thinking hard.

Then, down far, far into the gap, he saw it, faintly: a single spire of smoke.

"Spyro!"

The trip into the shadowed valley only punctuated the deceptive nature of its appearance, from outside. In the sun, it seemed reachable in minutes, especially with Figment's massive stride. Yet, over half an hour later, it remained as far off as before, even as the pair of dragons waded into the opening between mountains, the light fading fast.

"Good grief, how much further could it be?" Spyro moaned, leaning out over Figment's shoulder once again to take a break. "What, is it running away?"

"I'm a bit more used to science than outright magic," Figment muttered absently, "so with spells and enchantments, who could say?"

Another minute, another half mile or so, at Figment's size, and still, the smoke remained the same distance. Neither wanted to be the one to say it, so Spyro said something else, instead:

"I've got an idea."

"Great! What is it?"

"After what you did, back in my world," Spyro started, narrowing his eyes. "I know it only goes so far, and it doesn't work for everything, but..."

"What?"

"Imagine it's coming towards us."

Naturally, there was a pause.

"As in, *pull* it nearer?" Figment asked, laying the tracks of logic down ahead of him.

"Why not? We aren't going to catch up to it, like this."

The absurdity of that idea crashed into the absurdity of the suggestion.

"Just focus on pulling it closer, I dunno."

"I...*suppose* I can try it, yes..."

Not bothering to feign any sort of elaborate preparation, Figment instead set his sights on the spire of smoke, with every scrap of focus he could muster. Rather than imagining himself walking to it, he imagined the landscape pulling toward them, as though on a vast blanket, to be pulled...only the world remained stubbornly set in place.

Too big, he thought. You're pulling too much. If there's smoke, it's from a house, most likely. Pull the house, and just the house.

Though he was surely thinking to himself, the words sounded more like Blarion's than his own.

Hah...he would know as much!

Spyro could feel himself sink a little as Figment's huge shoulders relaxed, losing the tension from the journey. The humongous dragon smiled a bit, thoughts of his creator and homestead doing enough to set his full focus.

Right. Right, it's just another experiment at the lab!

A second time, Figment imagined the pull. The forest between the mountains faded off, until there was only the smoke, a ghostly thread that his mind soon wrapped around, and began to tug on, until a soft crack in the trees rose, far away, and to Spyro's amazement, it approached.

"Hey...alright! It's working!"

The tug wavered as his concentration faltered, before Figment redoubled. The smoke began to creep unwillingly nearer, then nearer, still, closing the magical gap between them. Spyro covered his muzzle with both hands, wanting to talk, but letting his comrade imagine undisturbed as the smoke pulled grudgingly closer, faster, going from a crawl to a run, until it was nearly in front of them.

It was then that a chimney began to peek up from the trees, then a humble thatched roof, then windows and brick, as it approximated not only to them, but to the sky.

"Whu," Spyro gulped, blinking more than once. "Is...the house...growing?"

Figment closed his eyes and kept at it, having to pull more and more, as the increasing mass of the house created more and more to pull on, as though the dwelling were blowing itself up to resist. In seconds the roof was up to Figment's belly, then up past his chest, outpacing him with a frightening speed, until he yelped aloud as its door swung open, and the 700-foot house swallowed them both up into itself.

The sides of the monstrous house nearly bridged the narrow gap between the mountains before it stopped growing, and closed its huge door. Satisfied, it shrank briskly back down to its normal state, sinking beneath the canopy of the forests, and vanishing outright.

The interior said they were in a house. A humble, ordinary one, comfortable and quaint, lit by a warmed hearth. Figment only reached as high up as the wooden handle of the door as he stood, somewhat taller than he would normally be, but not by much. Spyro, on the other hand, remained parrot-sized, stuck there on his shoulder.

"I'm just gonna say it," Spyro murmured, "it could feel a whole lot more *evil* in here..."

"It's...actually rather nice," Figment added, before looking them both over. "I can't believe it grew to fit us! We..."

Figment stopped as he looked out the window on the right; he padded over to it, peeking up over the lower rim, and gasped.

"Wait...the trees! The trees outside, they're above us again! Did...did the house shrink back down into the forest? Do you suppose we've shrunken with it?"

"We must have," Spyro muttered, before panicking where he rested. "Wait, shrunk!? Even further down? That...but...I'm smaller than ever, then!"

"Well, we don't know that's the case," Figment quickly corrected, offering up a sloppily

assembled grin. "We could ask the fairies about it, I suppose. Their home looks so cheery and reasonable, it...seems hard to believe they wouldn't suit it..."

"Where are they, anyhow?"

Figment ventured forth, floorboards creaking *hello* here and there as he went. There was the classic cast-iron cauldron hanging up in the hearth, over a crackling fire, there was the table with a marbled vase and a cacophony of loud-colored flowers; four wooden chairs framed a large table, three dusted and clean, and the fourth polished to a shine. A few decorative dressers snuggled into the corners, shadowed calmly by firelight, a coat rack guarding the doorway. Large oak beams added stability and surety to the ceiling, while a room full of soft, huge beds peeked at them from down a hallway. Four beds, in total, one of which was, again, pristine.

All in all, it was...nice. Very nice. Figment nearly found himself moving to one of the beds, overwhelmed by comfort. There wasn't one cold or desolate inch of the place, and the longer he tarried, the greater his willingness to stay grew.

"This has to be the place," Spyro chuckled. "It's too clean to be my home."

"It's even nicer than the lab," Figment hummed, not sure where to go next.

"So, where to now?" Spyro asked, clearly thinking the same.

"Ah, well," Figment stammered, rubbing his neck. "Hold on, let me set this down..."

Given the readjusted size of the bag of candies, Figment rested it on the floor, letting it sag against the table...before pausing, then looking back at it, wide-eyed.

"Ack! T-the bag!"

"What?"

"The bag, the candy bag!"

He pointed, and Spyro suddenly understood. The bag was there, fine and well...but it was regular-sized, compared to Figment, about half his own stature once more. He experimentally lifted the top flap, revealing mutually-sized candies aplenty.

"Wow, it reset the bag's size?" Spyro mused, staring. "Or...did it stay the same, and we shrunk back down to it? Does that mean it got normal, but I'm still smaller? Argh, I can't tell what's what..."

A soft rustling outside made both dragons turn, just as the door opened.

Inside stepped three small, older women, gracefully set in their golden years. Each of them wore pointed hats and capes, monochromatic dresses partially hidden under them. One was tall and wore red, another medium and green, the other shorter and blue. In the moment it took for them to enter, Figment and Spyro had backed across the room, nearly thumping into the table, just as a strange sort of slight wind rushed in with them. The women busily closed the door, all talk and murmur, not noticing them yet:

"There simply isn't enough in the forests, I fear," the green one sighed, shaking her head, as the blue one closed the door all the way, giving it an extra push to make sure the latch had caught, as the red one turned and slid the lock in after.

"Well, we can't despair of that," the red one said, authoritatively. "If one path ends, you pick another, and we—good heavens!"

All three women started, leaping back at the same time as Spyro and Figment. The women's wings flared out behind them, and immediately, half the dragons' questions were answered.

"I-I'm terribly sorry," Figment sputtered, putting his hands up. "I, er, *we* were passing by, looking for three fairies, and this house just loomed up so big that we couldn't get away, and the door opened, a-and—"

The trio watched as Figment rambled, until the red one put up a quieting hand.

"No, no. You're alright, my dear," she began, smiling. "You, ah, just gave us a start. We...haven't had guests in some time, you see. Especially from another world."

The other two nodded, one giving a wry scoff, the other nodding sadly.

"You aren't upset?" Spyro asked, drawing their attention. Clearly, they hadn't noticed him, at his smaller size. The moment only reinforced his agitation at being small. "We didn't break in, I swear!"

"You couldn't have," the green one said, clasping her hands together patiently. "The house would never have let you. Frankly, I'm amazed you even found it."

"You *shouldn't* have found it," the blue one grumbled, still eyeing them over.

"Yes, that is true," the red one seconded, finally approaching. "There's a powerful enchantment on our home, one we redoubled just today, after being attacked by that, well...rather *comely* dragoness that appeared out of the sky."

"And lo, two more strangers," the blue one huffed, glowering. "What brings you here?"

"Ah, first, introductions, yes?" the green one offered, stepping in between the two factions. "I'm Fauna, the one in red is Flora, and the blue one is Merryweather. Pleased to meet you two."

"Ah, I'm Figment, and he's Spyro," Figment said, clearing his throat. "We...well, we aren't from here. How to sum this up best? It's already a bit of a wild story, heh..."

"He's from London," Spyro said, plainly. "I'm from my world. This portal he created brought him to our world, then here, and we're along for the ride."

"Basically," Figment added, chuckling. Flora and Fauna were relaxed, if piqued. Merryweather was one of those two things.

"Well," Flora started, proffering a firm nod. "Welcome. It's a pleasure to have dragons here."

"You said, 'we', even though you aren't from Figment's world," Fauna began, moving closer to the fireplace. "But there are only you two. So, who is this other party?"

"That cursed dragoness, I bet," Merryweather grumbled. "The timing is too close. It has to be, think about it."

"We're not bad guys, promise," Spyro said, imploring. "And neither is Cynder!"

"We know," Flora replied. "The house would never have let you in, if you were."

"Cynder," Merryweather repeated, sourly. "Even her name sounds dangerous!"

"Can you describe her?" Figment asked, starting to move in towards the fireplace as well.

"Dark, winged, white horns," Merryweather said, still staring. "Pink belly, pink membranes on the wings. Markings on the muzzle, and ah, considerable—"

"Hips, yes," Flora interjected, cutting Merryweather a look. Merryweather's hands were up around her bosom, but she caught Flora's look, and let them drop back down. "Yes, that would be her. Not as tall as Maleficent, thankfully, but still quite big. Of course, she would never let a new underling outsize her, her ego would never allow it."

"Mellifluous?" Spyro asked, confused.

"Maleficent?" Figment repeated. "Who is that?"

"A cruel dark fairy, a witch," Fauna sighed. "She—"

"Caused all of this?" Spyro and Figment both said, unsurprised. They each looked to the other, and nodded.

"Well, yes," Flora answered, slowly. "King Stefan and Queen Leah offended her by not inviting her to the christening of their daughter, Aurora. Sixteen years since, she has borne a terrible grudge, and cursed the princess. She would have died of it, but—"

"You softened the curse," Figment finished, nodding. "We know."

Merryweather was now the closest to Figment and Spyro. She had her black wand out, pointing it at them, despite their house's initial judgment.

"So, you met her, then," Merryweather spoke. "You had to have."

"We arrived here to find Cynder and another giant dinosaur, Ripto, gone," Figment started, having existed long enough in London to know what something meant when it was pointed at you like that. "We wanted to know where Cynder was, and this black dragoness appeared at the castle with the thorns, and—"

"Lied to our faces," Spyro added, huffing. "I knew she was bad news! She smelled all wrong!"

Merryweather changed; her wand lowered, and she was smiling wide.

"I like them."

Spyro laughed, in turn, curling his tail up high.

"Hey, she's alright."

"Then your friend, Cynder," Flora wondered, a hand on her cheek, "has been enchanted, for certain. That dragoness you met, that was *absolutely* Maleficent."

"No wonder she didn't tell us so," Spyro growled. "What an evil name! That would've been a dead giveaway, right there."

"Right," Figment agreed. "So, the curse is her fault, got it. She must have known we wouldn't find this place, and sent us off on a chase while she adjusted her plans. Likely she drew some information from Cynder, but she seemed legitimately shocked at how huge we were—"

"That's right," Fauna said, remembering. "You said the house *grew* to swallow you both up. I promise, we won't talk the day away, but let me clear something up, before we act. How large are you both, normally?"

"Ah, well," Figment laughed. "That's a lot to—"

"He brought snacks with him when he went through the portal," Spyro said, talking fast, pointing to the bag by the table. "They got superpowered going through the portal. Different colored candies have different powers. He got...what, four-hundred..."

"Five hundred feet tall, heh," Figment corrected. "Well, two hundred-plus, arriving here."

"And I blew up these sweet muscles, and was maybe a hundred, after eating mine."

"I was able to open up a portal from their world to this one with my imagination, since *I'm* a being of pure imagination; but I couldn't control it, I only meant to go home..."

All three fairies just listened, awestruck.

"...but instead of taking me home, it brought us here, all of us...but going through the larger portal, it...I think it required energy to use, and so it reduced our sizes, going through. Still, I remained powerful enough to use some of my power, since I was able to imagine pulling your house closer to us, but then it grew to eat us, instead—"

"Alright, stop there, please," Flora said, rubbing her temples.

"Gracious," Fauna murmured, her hand over her mouth. "You...you *commanded* the house towards you, Figment? That..."

"How strong are you?" Merryweather gawked, openly impressed. "No one should be able to

manage that! The house must have swallowed you out of defense, then decided you were good enough to stay. It shrank you down to fit, since we can't have you stuffing it to the rafters with bulk."

"Gracious," Figment replied, struck. "I...don't know *how* strong I am, exactly. It's rather new to me. B-but, we were much bigger, when we arrived, so maybe my power was greater, too. I can't say whether or not my potency is relative to my stature, or not."

"Can you make another...portal?" Flora asked.

"If I tried hard enough, maybe. It might also be linked to how big or strong I am, at the time, as I posited. But we can't leave here without Cynder, she's our comrade in arms!"

"Exactly," Spyro said, snorting readily. "No way we're ditching her!"

Now, Merryweather was really grinning.

"So," she said, sniffing. "You want to get back at Maleficent, then?"

"Yes," both dragons answered.

"Then, here's what we do," she replied, her wand back out. Not only was it no longer pointed at them, it was pointed to the bag of candies; a brilliant bolt of blue light shot from its tip, casting the bag in a glimmering hue. With that, to both dragons' shock, it vanished.

"What the," Figment flinched. "Wait, no! I, w-we need that!"

Merryweather's smile went from friendly to cocky.

"Then, call for it."

He blinked, his mouth staying open.

"Ah...come here, bag? Return?"

Right away, a blue flash answered, and the bag was around his shoulders, with the front against his chest, facing him. Figment's eyes were nearly as big as the plates in a nearby hutch.

"Amazing!"

"That's right," Merryweather crowed. "You'll never lose it, this way, no matter where you travel, I've attached it to you, magically."

"Hah!" Figment cackled, doing a little dance in place. "Spyro, look!"

"Awesome!" Spyro seconded, perching up like a cat on Figment's shoulder. "We should celebrate, and have some candies! Right now! Seriously, I...don't want to be small..."

"Oh, your sizes will revert, when you leave here, don't fret," Fauna giggled, glad to see the two dragons happy. "I imagine you've been through so much, figuring things out as they happen. We

shouldn't keep you, you need to rescue your friend and snap her out of that curse!"

"Right," Figment said, nodding. "Right, we do! Uh...h-how do we break the curse on Cynder, though? Neither of us are magically...inclined..."

"That's why we're coming with you," Merryweather cut in, happy to get to the meat of things. "Any help you need, we'll give."

"Yes, consider us your support," Flora added, readying her wand. "The moment we exit here, you both will grow up to your previous sizes, and with our help...I think...yes, I do think we could actually defeat Maleficent, and revert this horrid curse!"

"I suppose it was providence, that we should meet this way," Fauna said, finally smiling in earnest, as she took Figment's feral hand, and shook it thankfully, and Figment shook back.

"Well, we'll take whatever help we can, hehe," Figment cheered, as something sharp and angular-sounding clicked once, just once, behind them all. But, it was enough.

The party spun about to see a small bird there, inside the house, along with them. A raven, male, with black feathers and a long yellow beak, pink bags under each eye. He regarded them coldly, cocking his head, and while the dragons watched on in curiosity, the three fairies recoiled in dread.

"No!" Merryweather balked. "How could he..."

"The enchantment, how did he get inside? How could he have found us?" Fauna wondered, before looking to the two dragons. "Oh, heavens, he followed you! A further deception!"

"I-it wasn't us!" Figment stammered. The raven cawed as it clicked around on the floor with his long talons, as if laughing at them. "We didn't know!"

"You were tricked, Figment," Flora replied. "The house let you in, so we know. It shouldn't have let this little devil inside, though! Maleficent must have protected him in advance!"

"She let him track us to find the place, on the chance we succeeded," Spyro added, as the three fairies drew their wands, pointing them at the raven. "Maybe she figured the house would let us in, and not them!"

"We cannot let Diablo go!" Flora commanded, the fairies approaching the ominous little bird. He seemed unflustered by their threats, ruffling his feathers mockingly at them as he opened his beak.

"Who?" Figment asked. "The raven?"

"His name is Diablo," Merryweather growled. "He's Maleficent's rotten right hand!"

Of all present, Figment was the first to cry out, because he saw what was in the bird's beak, and understood what it was.

"I'll blast that bird to stone," Merryweather barked, the tip of her wand glowing brighter. "You'll be sorry you broke in when we opened our door, you miserable little beast!"

"Spyro! Candy!" Figment gasped, pointing. "He stole a candy from the bag!"

Indeed, a shiny black orb was there, in Diablo's beak. The bird was clearly intelligent enough to grasp what a prize it was, just from his smug cawing and fluffed feathers. Was he showing off, or just threatening them back? The answer came in the worst way as Diablo tilted his head up and gulped it down, his small neck bulging out.

"Was that a black candy?" Spyro asked, as the fairies advanced on Diablo.

"We don't know what that color does!"

Diablo swallowed it down fully, caw-laughing brazenly at the three encroaching fairies. For a moment, there was no change at all, surprisingly. But as their wands glowed with magic, and as they neared, the raven's eyes shut, and an unmistakable grin spread past his beak as their proximity caused him to start shuddering and fluffing out. Specks of light drew off the wands, and into him, throughout.

Two and two made four, and that made Figment cry out, too late:

"Wait! No, no magic!"

Three bolts of colored light burst from their wands, battering the tiny raven, pushing him back into the cottage wall. Diablo cawed and growled, but not in alarm. If anything, he sounded...overjoyed.

Raw magic poured into the bird, and in turn, his feathers ruffled out more and more, and more, blowing him up like a living balloon. His beak stretched out longer, growing along with his surging body, which lurched to two feet, then four. The more they blasted him, the larger and stronger Diablo became, and at five feet, he rose to it in full, now a foot taller than any of the fairies.

"W...what foul trick is this!?" Flora gasped, backing away, all three of them stopping, the moment Diablo loomed over them. "How is this possible?"

"He stole one of the candies, while we were talking!" Figment shouted, to which Diablo smirked and nodded gladly, as if gloating. "That color...it must absorb power! He's absorbing your magic! Don't blast him again!"

The women lowered their wands, but the damage was done; more accurately, it was *ongoing*. As they watched on, the bird continued to rapidly expand, his black wings flapping destructively, getting bigger and wider each time, until their ten-foot span began knocking over pictures and trinkets, scattering a mess of bobbles out onto the floor.

"He isn't stopping, Figment!" Spyro gulped, as the bird groaned, shook, then blew up even bigger, still! "Why is he still getting bigger!?"

His beak lowered happily against his ballooning chest, displacing a wave of feathers, and it only sank deeper as his feral chest exploded even larger, still. Nine feet shuddered up to 10, then 11, the raven's head bumping the ceiling, pushing against it as he swelled bigger and bigger. 12 feet...14 feet...18 feet...his head and neck bulged up between two rafters until the beams creaked, as the gigantic raven closed his eyes, clacked his growing beak, quivered deep, then boomed all the way up to 25 feet,

flooding the living room with feathered girth. Every attempt at vertical growth was caught by the cracking ceiling, forcing it to go horizontal instead, making Diablo billow wider and wider, out.

"I...I don't know!" Figment shouted, as he rumbling grew louder around them.

Diablo's bulging bird-chest pushed the dragons back into the wall as his avian haunches surged out against the struggling fairies (to Diablo's increasing delight).

"The entire house...it's a magic cottage!" Merryweather cried out, drowning in a sea of ever-swelling black feathers. "He's got to be...ack, soaking it up, by t-touch!"

"AWK, AWK!" Diablo boomed, the raven trembling in joy, before booming even larger!

His inflating sides bullied the table and chairs away, pinning them to the walls as his bulk swelled uncontrollably, heaving flat to the walls, which groaned and warped, struggling to contain the huge bird. This proved all the more troublesome, as contact with the magical interior only fed Diablo even more, even faster, forcing his puffed figure to explode in size.

The chain reaction was beyond disastrous: the 30-foot bird-hemoth *click-clicked* his beak, cruel talons bulging and curving thicker and meaner underneath his bulk, which overfilled the room as he rumbled and burst even *bigger*, too big to fit another inch of himself inside. His wings and beak and legs all intersected messily as he grew into a humongous ball of bulk, his heartbeat thrumming heavier and heavier through the house.

"We have to...get him outside, now!" Flora commanded, as a growing feather rubbed against her face, getting bigger and longer as she swatted it away.

"But we can't use magic!" Merryweather said, muffled, pinned to the back corner. "He'll...just absorb it and get even bigger!"

"He's...getting bigger, already!" Flora retorted.

"Just let him outgrow the place!" Spyro shouted, having squeezed himself up and free from where Diablo's bulk was smothering Figment. Despite being, well, *bird-sized*, he had managed to sneak a candy out from Spyro's bag, and kept scaling the raven's growing body with one hand, hugging the candy to himself with the remaining arm.

"I-it's much worse than that," Fauna coughed, from another corner, getting buried under too much raven. "Th-the cottage...will defend itself!"

With that, the house did indeed react, groaning all over in protest.

Suddenly the pressure eased, as the entire house swelled out in scope, its interior surging up and away, letting them all tumble off of Diablo's 50-foot tall form. In seconds, Diablo only took up about half of the room, cracks sealing back up along the widening walls as the house outgrew him entirely. The fairies, Spyro and Figment, however, remained as big as they were before.

"It must only keep us at the size we were when we first entered," Figment guessed as he dusted himself off and collected the candies that had spilled loose.

"Yeah," Spyro started, still hugging the humongous bird's neck as he tried to ready the candy he took. "But the bird isn't shrinking any, at all!"

"He's...under Maleficent's spell," Flora gasped, finally free for the moment. "If it was enough for him to enter, then the rules won't apply to him!"

Just as Spyro tried to fit the comparatively oversized candy into his maw, Diablo trembled deep all over again; his smile returned as he huffed, trembled all over, and began to blow up again, swelling even bigger, rising like dough to 70 feet; his rumbling worsened as he continued blowing up to 80 feet, billowing hotly against the self-arranging furniture yet again, buffeting everyone back into the walls a second time, with even greater fervor.

"He'll keep feeding..." Flora continued, already pressing back flat to the wall. "The bigger the house tries to grow, to avoid him...the bigger he'll grow, to fill it!"

This amused the massive raven to no end, and he let out several blasting caws of triumph as he bulged up to 100 feet, filling the interior a second time, his growth even more aggressive, as the house pumped out more and more magic, to defend itself.

"Gah, stupid," Spyro grouched, trying desperately to stuff the golden candy into his tinier mouth. "If I could just...eat this stupid, awesome candy, I'd..."

A burst of magic shot out from Merryweather's wand, just before she sank back into the feathers, and instead of Diablo, it struck true and hit Spyro. He rumbled a bit himself, then blew up a slight bit bigger; compared to the candies, it wasn't much, but his mouth grew just enough to fit the large candy in, and as much as his body didn't want to swallow something that big, Spyro wanted it more, and made it happen. The bulge distended his purple neck as he put paws to its sides, willing the mass to finish its course, with a hard swallow.

As Diablo grew and grew, victoriously clicking his beak, Spyro began to grow, as well.

"Alright, I...nnngh!"

His own boast was cut short as his body changed, dramatically. Instead of growing his muscles out, or simply getting bigger, overall, his arms trembled, then clicked out, snapping joints into the same places as a human's, elbows sliding back as his arms lengthened and angled into a man's, his haunches pushing out, the formation of his forelegs shifting as they straightened. His paws pushed out, thinning into fingers, and his shoulders rolled as he slowly sank down into Diablo's growing feathers, the same as everyone else.

Figment beat and shoved uselessly against the 130-foot bird's belly, his hands slipping against slick feathers, the air getting crushed out of him as Diablo rumbled against him and ballooned bigger, the pressure of his body becoming unbearable.

Diablo's head and beak slammed back up into the ceiling, the 160-foot giant smart enough to know what the stupid little house would do. Indeed, the house was starting to quake and swell out yet again, snapping trees and shoving out tons of uprooted soil across the forest, as it towered higher and higher still, pushing past 200 feet tall, then 250. For a second time the gap between the narrow points of

the mountain's bases lessened, as the house billowed to fill more and more of it. Inside, the 180-foot tall raven huffed his pleasure out as he shook his head happily; already, he found himself suddenly only as big as the overturned table, looking around in amusement at the 400-foot house's insides, ready for what was about to come.

"Figment, quick!" Spyro boomed, the 50-foot dragon scrambling back out of the huge bird's feathers, revealing himself on two feet, like a man, his huge muscles remaining, having married quite well to his humanoid body. He admired himself for a moment, smiling, before he turned to the limp form of his friend, now considerably smaller than he was. "Hey, wake up! You need a candy, while we still have a second!"

"W-what happened?" Flora asked, the fairy dragging herself out from behind Diablo's gigantic back, as the huge bird rumbled yet again. "Heavens, Spyro, you...you changed!"

"Heh, yup! Gold candy, it's what I managed to grab before *bird-brain* here got too big! Sorry in advance, but I think the only way to..."

Already, the towering raven was quaking all over, deeper and stronger. Diablo groaned, rolling his eyes back in delight as feathers fluffed out and his body started to rattle and spasm with another spurt of magic-infused growth—an enormous one.

"...we need to break your house! Super-sorry!"

Merryweather was already dusting herself off, nodding grimly to Flora. Fauna only managed to emerge from the other side of Diablo a moment, as his rumbling body began to inflate even bigger, pushing her back into place—but she had nodded, just before.

"Oh, my," Flora moaned, before steeling herself. "D...do what you must!"

"Thanks!" Spyro said, before grabbing Figment's prostrate body up in his bulky arms. "Okay, come on, Figment! Wake up, buddy! Medicine time! Ahh, come on!"

No good. Figment was choked out from the squeezing, though still breathing. Spyro thought fast and reached for the bag, just as a massive yellow beak darted down, both tips closing and clutching the bag, yanking so hard that it detached from Figment completely. Spyro shouted nothing in particular, inarticulate with panic, as he reached up to take the bag back. He snagged one strap, and the bag strained, before snapping loose from his grip. Still, one candy ejected from the snap-back, and he grabbed it in mid-air.

"No time!"

He didn't bother seeing what color he had gotten as he forced it into Figment's open mouth with a gigantic thumb. He was still swelling bigger, but not as fast as Diablo; the candy went into Figment's mouth, and Spyro pinched the smaller dragon's nostrils closed.

Figment sleepily squirmed, then gulped it down, and Spyro let go, just as Diablo's black bulk blew up into them both, yet again, a third wave of quaking growth blowing the raven all the way up to a staggering 400 feet! His head bashed up into the ceiling, but the avian accepted it, unfazed, throbbing up stronger and mightier by the second as he filled the interior a third time.

"Come on, come on," Spyro demanded, waiting for the candies to do their job.

The electric thrill of growth compounded as he swelled up to 70 feet, then 90 feet, nearly back to what he had been, outside. The humanoid body was definitely new, but he knew well enough to start pushing with both man-arms against Diablo's incessant growth, straining his muscles to partial effect.

"AWK!" Diablo cawed, glaring back down over the rising swell of his own body, staring daggers at Spyro, who was just large enough to keep his head up out of the feathers.

"Oh, sh-shut up!" Spyro shot back, refusing to be intimidated. "Or I'll cook you, b-bird!"

Overtly offended, Diablo snorted through his beak and boomed bigger, still, expanding so violently that the bulge of his chest rolled like the tide, shutting the dragon up as it pinning his muzzle in. Even as Spyro ballooned to 120 feet, bigger than he had ever been, Diablo blew it away; the raven quivered, then erupted bigger, and bigger, 450 feet mashing tight against the house, which openly warped outwards from the sudden force. Huge cracks snapped along the outside as the raven continued to pump himself past 460 feet, then 470, willing himself to greater and more dominant sizes.

Yet, as expected, the attacked house started to repair itself, sealing back up as it counter-grew, pumping back to form as it surged to 500 feet, then 600, then 700, trying a much harder push, so as to confound the threat. This, in turn, only made Diablo rumble even deeper, the avian crowing madly as he shook like he was in an earthquake, more and more power bulging into his stretching body...

Only to find, as he burst past 500 feet, that a sudden wall of purple scales was competing with him, and winning. His eyes widened as the muzzle and vast inflating belly of Figment ballooned into his bulk, starting to push back. The dragon grew and grew, despite being knocked out, replacing more and more of the 700-foot interior with himself, shoving the stunned raven back, and back, and back. Diablo's wings flailed furiously, smacking the indifferent Figment as his body expanded frantically, his haunches and clawed feet swelling warmly against the walls, too fast to counter, too big to stop.

"AWKAWK! CAWWWW-AWW!"

"Haha!" Spyro vengefully laughed, even as his 150-foot body was crushed tight between two rumbling, ballooning bellies of feathers and scales.

Figment snored dumbly as he inflated even larger than Diablo, shoving the wheezing bird into the far wall, until cracks danced out wider and deeper, too fast to heal. The entire house swelled over the forests, blowing out like a great bulging egg; cracks formed over cracks, the roof booming higher, snapping apart, the chimney splitting and breaking away before 700 feet of Figment shook, trembled, and blasted up to 800 feet, forcing the poor cottage to wobble, strain, crack, strain, split! A whole segment blew away, a vast purple bulge bursting free, before another blew out on the other side, the opening forcing a forest of black feathers out into the open, before—

BOOOOOOOOM!

The entire house, enlarged as it had been, blew apart, crashing and shattering in a wave of destruction, sending plaster and brick and iron and wood and fairies and dragons everywhere at once. Everything and everyone crashed into the woods below, leaving only the monumentally huge,

towering, still-sleeping Figment there, where the house had been, over 800 feet tall, his massive scaly belly swelling up and down as he slept.

Flora, Fauna and Merryweather all found one another, down in the snapped trees and ruins; they looked up to see Diablo taking flight, somehow able to get his 600-foot body up into the skies, his flapping wings shaking everything below with a great volley of air. The bag remained snagged, a mere speck against his vast talons, his prize and prisoner...leaving the fairies, Spyro and Figment back down below, in the valley.

"OH, SO *HE* CAN FLY," Spyro fumed, dusting himself off with his new man-hands. "SURE, WHY NOT! HE SEEMED PLENTY-HEAVY, WHEN HE WAS PRESSING AGAINST US..."

He rose to a looming stand over the three fairies, now mere specks against the man-dragon's grandeur, as Spyro rumbled anew, and looked himself over in confusion.

"WHAT..."

That was about all Spyro could manage, before his massive, muscular form rippled up even bigger; his man-feet and vast clawed toes billowed out wider, longer, covering the upturned soil as he surged higher and higher.

"...IN THE...WORLD..."

He snorted happily, unable to hide his glee as his muscles tensed, shook and boomed out; while they didn't outpace him this time, they certainly did keep up, staying proportionately to his feral state. His chest twitched receptively, two swollen, plated pecs bulging proudly, flexing into strong, taut mounds. His biceps stretched and peaked hungrily, his thighs flaring larger, his hips broadening, as he pumped up, and up, clearing 200 feet. All he had time for was a toothy grin, and a shudder as he stretched up past 210 feet, then 220 feet. The fairies backed away in wonderment as Spyro whimpered blissfully, closed his eyes, wobbled, then blew up with a last, audible burst, clearing 250 feet; he exhaled and shivered off the lingering waves of growth, hopelessly energized.

"IS...T...T-THIS..."

He looked himself over, smiling even wider, before doing a fairly earthshaking hop in place, sending the fairies into a tumble below, by his house-sized feet.

"...IS AWESOME! HAHA! LOOK AT ME, NOW!"

"Ooh," Fauna sighed, taking to flight, in order to reach up to Spyro's towering muzzle. "It seems the growth you lost going inside our home returned, on top of your new spurt! Those candies of Figment's truly are astounding, aren't they?"

"OH, SHOOT, FIGMENT," Spyro muttered, blushing at his behavior. He turned to see the far larger dragon there, poleaxed, splaying dumbly across the unwilling bed of the forests. "HEY, Figment! BUDDY, YOU AWAKE? COME ON, UP YOU GO! HOP TO!"

"It seems he's done, for now," Flora murmured, flying around Figment's gargantuan body, which began to shake and tremble in his sleep, before starting to swell up even larger. "Goodness!"

"Oh, great," Merryweather moaned, fleeing. "The previous size is going back to him, too!"

Spyro chose to hold onto Figment, rather than bother with retreating, as his comrade grew bigger and bigger, snapping the rim of the canopy around his scaly arms and bulging belly and legs and feet. Compared to his new size, the 250 from before only seemed a trifle, adding another fourth of his size to what was there seconds ago, pushing the mountainous dragon all the way to 1,050 feet of awkward, horizontal glory.

"CAN YOU WAKE HIM UP?" Spyro asked the three fairies as they floated around his head, almost the same way that Sparx did. "I'M NOWHERE NEAR BIG ENOUGH TO LIFT HIM, EVEN WITH ALL *THIS* GOING ON."

He demonstrably flexed his bulging arm, unable to help doing so.

"We can try," Flora answered, readying her wand. "But we are losing time! Diablo will go back to Maleficent, he's already possessed of a healthy head start! And he has the bag—"

"WHAT?" Spyro boomed, the panic they felt now his own. "SO, CALL IT BACK, THEN! QUICK! YOU CAST THAT CALL SPELL, RIGHT?"

Even Merryweather suddenly seemed abashed, which was a sight for Spyro.

"No. No, it's been attached to Figment. Only he can call it back."

"FIGURES. THEN I'M GOING ON AHEAD. JUST POINT ME WHERE."

"Follow Diablo," Flora said, sternly. "At that huge a size, he cannot be missed! We shall wake Figment...then find a friend to help us, as fast as possible. He is a noble ally!"

"RIGHT, GOOD! I ONLY NEED ONE MORE THING FROM YOU, PLEASE!"

The three women looked confused, until Spyro explained...

Diablo sailed through the skies, a vast shadow on the sun; his titanic wings spanned over 1,100 feet as he smiled and flapped, loving the way the skies themselves moved with his merest efforts. He caught sight of the kingdom below, stretching out around the great castle at its center. Vast yellow feet thudding down over entire houses and streets of the seemingly abandoned city as he landed, shaking the terrain. The aftershock tore through streets and alleys, rattling windows and shaking trees, the city's newest occupants stumbling out into the open, in a panic.

Countless stumbling creatures spilled forth from houses and inns and taverns, from sewers and fountains, all of them halting and gawking at what towered over them. Hundreds of small, goblin-esque cronies, goons and toadies unified (more or less) on the cobblestone walks, all of them staring in stupefied shock at Diablo's enormity. The bird noticed, and gave a giddy, fluff-puffing shudder of approval, as the black dragoness reared up over the walls of the city, easily scaling it at her size.

"Well!" she hummed, her green eyes slitting in interest at her monstrous pet. "Whatever it was

that enabled those moronic dragons to grow so titanic seems to have been passed onto you, my pet."

"AWWWWWK!"

The singular squawk blasted loudly, cascading around the city.

"Then, pray, tell," Maleficent cooed, her voice dark smoke and silk, "how, exactly, did such a *monumental* gift befall you?"

The immense raven puffed up smugly, lifting a vast leg and foot over the rooftops and chimneys and walkways and bridges between the upper and lower city levels. He towered over it all with no trouble as his huge talon tapped the streets, the many underlings parting fearfully as a small leather bag slid down, down onto it. As he lifted his talon, Maleficent thudded along to intercept it, curious.

"It smells...sweet," she hissed, in glibly-restrained disgust. She reared back up, snorting a plume of smoke as she undid the top flap with a huge claw, revealing the dozens of multicolored candies therein. "Hmm. Treats?"

"CAW!"

"Oh?" the dark dragoness exclaimed, her glowing eyes wider now. "Really? The black ones absorb magic...and you were at their home...haha! I see! My clever Diablo! And, these other colors?"

Diablo shook his head, then cocked his beak.

"No idea? How very, very interesting! Which shall I...oh...oh, *you*..."

The oversized black claw picked and prodded, until a single dark red candy tumbled out.

"Blood-red. Rose red, even. How amusing."

The minions all mumbled and watched as Maleficent dipped her large muzzle low and flicked out a forked tongue, snatching the tiny candy up with lustful greed. She gulped, then shook her muzzle, her glowing green nostrils wrinkling unpleasantly.

"Ugh. Too sweet," she sighed, playing off her reaction in front of her many underlings, who all watched in fascination. She too, waited. And waited.

"...Nothing, is it?" she coolly hissed, snorting out a lick of flame. "How dull."

As if to console his master, the towering Diablo leaned in, surprisingly carefully, and offered the great dragoness his even-greater beak, in a show of comfort. She growled, shaking her head and horns.

"Not to worry, my pet...there are others yet to try..."

She brought a large clawed hand up to Diablo's looming beak, to guide it back; yet, the moment she touched him, it happened. Her eyes bulged as she trembled, her touch electric against Diablo's

beak, before a vast floodgate of raw energy opened to her, pouring in; the monstrously huge raven rumbled as well, confused, then lurched in, shrinking lower to the ground.

The avian blinked in bafflement, then cried out as he once again slipped down smaller, and smaller, all his hard-stolen size flowing rapidly into Maleficent.

"Ah," she grunted, quivering all over, as her draconic body suddenly bloomed larger. Her clawed feet tensed, toes digging and scraping the stones below, before billowing even bigger. 30 feet swelled loudly, stretching, expanding and heaving, bulging and bursting to 40 feet. Her spiked tail crept back like a growing weed, snaking past the city center, the tip pushing between homes and shops as she shivered in delight, rolling her swelling shoulders, her neck thickening and sprouting out higher, and higher. "AH!"

Diablo unhappily clicked his beak, feeling another 10 feet slip away, then another, shrinking from 550 feet down to 500 as Maleficent blew up from 50 feet to 100, in one strained bulge of growth, forcing her belly to blow up larger, then push the size out through her rumbling limbs and into her growing head and snout, her horns curling out meaner and longer.

"Y...yes," she groaned, as Diablo worriedly dwindled to 400 feet, another hundred usurped feet bulging into Maleficent, who roared as she violently boomed even *bigger!*

Two hundred feet of scaly bulk surged over the center, black sides swelling into the public fountain, cracking, then snapping it as her girth billowed unstopably through. Her feet grew wider apart, enlarging into her onlooking minions, who began to scatter as the uncaring dragoness tilted her head back and blew a streak of green flame, shaking and moaning, before exploding up to 300 feet!

As he neared 400 feet Diablo panicked enough to pull back, breaking their contact and leaving Maleficent at his size. The dragon shuddered and snapped her huge jaws happily, her glowing eyes soon fluttering open.

"Hah," she panted, digging her huge, terrible claws into the cracking streets. "Haha! How amazing! To think such magic existed, could be taken...hah...I must...have *more...*"

She thudded a huge paw down, approaching Diablo. The loyal Raven saw this and stood back to full attention, staying dutifully put, but wearing an unhidden grimace. Maleficent saw the expression, then halted, blinked, and shook her head. When her eyes opened again, the crazed zeal lingered on. But, it had diminished enough.

"No," she said, slowly. "No, my pet, that size...is yours. You earned it."

The mighty Diablo finally relaxed, nodding thankfully (and fearfully). Maleficent turned around, her thick tail whipping around in thought, as though it might yet land on a better idea. The minions far below them snapped to as she laughed, lowering her now-enormous muzzle over them all.

"Gather that bag, and follow," she said, suddenly cold and blunt, her tone far removed from the affection reserved for the raven. "Quickly, you imbeciles! At last, I know just what to do with that strange new toy of mine..."

With her thudding heavily away, Diablo finally let out a sigh, looking in blatant relief to the

skies above. Loyal to the last, the humongous avian stomped along, his massive feet narrowly missing homes and market booths as the 400-foot beast stepped along, following the horde of goons as they swarmed the streets of the stolen city.

At the ruins of her old castle, not far from the outer rims of the kingdom, the huge dragoness stopped. She brought a massive claw down, scooped it into the hook of a gigantic handle to a gigantic trap door and, at this new size, practically tore it off its hinges. That it was just that easy to manage had Maleficent humming with approval as she looked into the pit, and growled eagerly.

"Awaken, you feeble thing," she commanded, as something stirred down below, making the ruins of her old castle wobble the slightest bit. "I've found a fitting use for you. And spare me any thanks...this much will suffice as payment for my generosity, in not ending you..."

Down in the darkness below the castle, Ripto stirred, groggy and disoriented.

"W-wait," the dinosaur grumbled, blinking against whatever meager light that made it in around Maleficent's vast bulk. "Lemme loose, you..."

Before he could fully awaken, Maleficent's massive paw pushed down into the pit, thumping heavy against Ripto's billowed-out body.

"Hey...HEY! Wait, what're you..."

Right away, at her touch, the protesting dinosaur's spherical sides decreased, deflating down, down towards Ripto's center, as he dwindled from 500 feet to 470...430...400...he found himself decreasing, in inverted gulps, that fullness and power bleeding off into Maleficent. His attempts at moving away were pointless, as he nearly filled the entirety of the pit he had been shoved into earlier. And as he shrank, once again, Maleficent grew, and grew, and grew.

"Yes," she hissed, her eyes lidding to glowing green threads as the stolen hundred feet of mass pumped into her, billowing her up and up like a great ebony bladder, her scales screaming in joy as they pulled over-tight against more and more growth. "I can take...from anyone! H-how...perfect!"

Her hand grew over more and more of Ripto, making it harder and harder for the panicking reptile to flee into any corners as her palm consumed every inch of scale it could, her swelling claws digging into what remaining bulk he had. The last shreds of light thinned to nothing as Maleficent's increasingly huge wrist swelled and swelled, filling the opening entirely, bulging against its borders as she relentlessly expanded up above.

"S...stop..."

Ripto's bravado died in his maw, falling into a stunted whimper as the ground above him cracked and sagged lower, then lower, still, dirt tumbling down as he shriveled inward again, and again. 200 feet proved too much to keep, then 180...160...140...while Maleficent's scaly girth hurriedly and hungrily rocketed larger, stronger.

"More," she boomed, pressing her growing palm even tighter, gasping, as she billowed up to 590 feet...630 feet...her spiny back arched up higher, peeking beyond the crumbling walls of her former

abode. Her sides pressed in against the remnants of once-strong pillars, snapping, splitting, then shoving them off in segments as her sheer mass bullied through. "MORE!"

Still, the dragoness took, and took, blowing up past 700 feet, then 740. The inner shell of her castle strained and complained as she laughed, letting her stretching skin bulge and press against odd corners and through broken stone stairwells. Her minions all inched back every time Maleficent roared and swelled even higher, even wider, blowing up past 750 feet. The towering Diablo watched on in shock, his beak open, the gigantic raven forced to look up and up, every bit the same as them.

Ripto's vision was choked into darkness once again, but now his senses were failing. As the energy bled out of his 70-foot body, which wobbled and shrank down to 50, he felt his consciousness fading towards a much-needed blackout, and as he withered down into a meager 2 feet, he was finally allowed it. Partly, because he had nothing left to give, but the more pressing factor was that, simply put, Maleficent's hand was far, *far* too big for him. A palm big enough to rip an entire tower up from the ground pulled at the opening it had wedged itself into; finding it stuck, she pulled with *real* force.

The ground surrounding the pit uprooted, exploding rock and soil all about as Maleficent inspected her oversized hand, then snarled and blew out a catastrophe of flame, just from laughing. Her laugh could incinerate the skies, and she nearly did so as the 900-foot behemoth bellowed and basked in her own heaviness, her raw *size*.

"Better," she cooed, her voice a quaking blast of sound. "Much better."

The underlings began to rub at their necks absently, many getting stuck from staring at such demanding angles, just to see all of their master. A monstrous paw shifted as she lifted her street-sized feet, slamming them down with impossible weight, all in order to turn to her tiny subjects and smile wickedly from on high.

"Fetch my new ward," she commanded, ice blowing in on her words. "She has work to do, and right away. No...no, you're too small to go fast enough. Diablo!"

Diablo shook off the sight of his master looming half a thousand feet above him, the castle ruins bowing and tumbling to dust around her. He cawed obediently, then thudded his way back towards town. When he returned, not one moment later, Cynder was in tow, following behind the much larger bird. Even at 15 feet in size, no taller than the average rooftop of the average home, the underlings still parted for her, clearly scared enough to bother doing so as she passed.

She came to a stop, still humanoid, still tall and ample, her eyes glazed into dulled mirrors.

"My Queen," Cynder said, flatly. She looked up at the colossus Maleficent had blown up into, a living hill of scales and claws and bulk. "What is your bidding?"

"The fairies you failed to slay," the massive dragoness rumbled, "they recruited the aid of a Prince, the son of the neighboring kingdom's ruler. He was put to a quest, in what they *think* was a secret contract, just yesterday. This silly little man is named Phillip, and you will see to it that his quest to awaken Princess Aurora...fails. Now, before you depart for the woods in which he thinks he can sneak closer, you will do one further thing."

"Yes?" Cynder asked, unblinking, unmoving.

Maleficent nodded down to the underling that was lugging the bag of candies, and the goon quickly hauled it closer.

"Do you know what these different colors mean?" she asked. "You traveled with those simpletons, you would have seen."

"The blue one, my Queen, is purely growth. Great growth. The gold is for *some* growth, and a body like a human's, such as the one I achieved. Green is for some growth, and muscles that can crush any foe. Pink is to expand like a blimp. The other two, my Queen, I have not seen in play."

"Then, we know all of them," Maleficent snarled, pleased. "Red is to take the size of others for oneself...and black, as my dear pet found, absorbs power. Well, then...give her a blue one. Now."

The panicked little mote of a minion nodded, his tiny hand shaking as he managed to fish a blue candy out of the bag. Cynder blankly turned, leaned down, and plucked it up in two big finger-claws, popping it into her mouth and swallowing.

Maleficent watched Cynder intently, making sure she wouldn't become outmatched, as Cynder began to rumble, and start to swell up bigger, and bigger.

"Perhaps I might allow her to enjoy it," Maleficent hummed, thinking the gesture over, as Cynder blew calmly up taller, higher, her hips swelling out in unison with her healthy chest, proportionately bulging out as she rose up over the ruined castle ruins. She heaved up from 15 feet to 20 feet...30 feet...50 feet...Her slight size increase from the last world seemed to give her a higher base to start with, and in seconds her rumbling scales stretched tighter as she burst up to 80 feet in one thick spurt, her shoulders rigid, her eyes unblinking, even as her tail sprouted longer down behind her, her clawed toes swelling larger, her thighs bulging warmly.

"Hmm," Maleficent mused, cocking her humongous head slowly. "Effective, if plain. Which one might I choose next, I wonder?"

As she thought it over, Cynder continued to expand heavily, her chest plates stretching out as her bust inflated out ahead of her, her rump booming in kind, as her head rose up past Maleficent's looming haunches, now over 130 feet tall, and still growing bigger...and bigger...and bigger...

4.

Having so little practice, the thought of trying to fly again weighed almost as much on Spyro's mind as his body did upon the thudding ground—and that was *earlier*. Now two-hundred and fifty feet tall at the horns, the enlarged dragon abandoned flight as an option. Besides, having become bipedal and all, just putting one foot in front of the other did the job fine. In fact, walking wasn't so bad a thing, once he adjusted to it. Having all the body's weight bear down on just two points was interesting, in how it made vibrations double up and travel back.

"If the other dragons could see me now," he chuckled, pushing his fears over the fractured group away. "Talk about looking up to me! That's all they would do!"

Spyro kept walking, his own booming footfall the only thing there to keep him company,

echoing about the sprawl of forestry below.

"I'm sure he's fine," he told no one, out of nowhere, betraying his thoughts. "Just gotta follow that no-good bird..."

It was something of a blessing that Diablo had swollen to such a magnitude, since it made tracking him from land stupid-easy. Even miles away, the dragon could suss out the huge raven's form; it dipped into a landing, vanishing beyond the cursed castle from before, and Spyro made a little knowing cluck with his tongue.

"Yup."

He could be there in another ten or so minutes, he figured, as his pace quickened. It was just time enough to force the barest of bones of a plan together:

"Just gotta clobber that bird, get the bag back, and save Cynder, before something awful—"

What rose back up into the skies was big enough to ignite Spyro's curiosity, then his confusion. A set of wings unfurled, clearly draconic, and as he squinted, that confusion soured.

"Oh, no, Maleficent," Spyro growled, glowering. "Figures! She must have grown some, and now she's going to *wait a minute, what—*"

Familiar markings pronounced the form as it flapped higher, then shot out through the air above, bolting off abruptly to the North. The huge figure only got so far as Spyro watched, before it sagged lower, heavier, awkwardly readjusting to its increased size and weight; stumbled by gravity, it skidded down into the trees, landing, shaking off, then walking purposefully onward.

"Cynder!" Spyro gasped, breaking off toward the North. "Hey!"

Some part of Spyro knew she was going to keep on walking, that she would likely ignore his voice and its great relief. It didn't make it any easier when she confirmed it by storming along indifferently, ignoring his call. He broke into a more destructive jog to close the gap, and the more he did, the bigger Cynder seemed to get. From afar, she looked maybe as big as he had been, leaving their world. Up close, though, even with his size increase, she was tall enough that his muzzle hardly reached her shoulder. She must have been over 300 feet tall, in that case, a far cry from her previous scale! Despite the inherent intimidation factor, he cleared his throat, and persisted:

"Cynder," he huffed, all that violet muscle twitching, as he thoomed nearer, and waved her down. "Come on, turn around! I bet you secretly want to acknowledge me...right? Hello?"

On the dragoness walked, prompting Spyro to jog up, in efforts to cut her off.

"This would all be a lot smoother if you'd just snap out of whatever..."

His voice trailed off, one toothy grin slipping away on sight of her. Her muzzle was calm and terribly detached. Her eyes were hazy, seeing and blind, staring through everything, and seeing nothing. Unfortunately, that included him.

"Oh," Spyro sighed, dejectedly falling back as he tried to think. "Okay, no sale. Won't waste time talking. Well, that's fine...I'll just *make* you stop..."

His gargantuan calves tensed, stretching every purple scale; he bounded ahead, turned to face Cynder, and planted his big, heavy heels into the cracking turf. The topsoil split and rolled back as he took up a stance, braced, then (as politely as possible) laid hands on her. Instead of a slap or protest, Spyro felt the press of a bigger body walking into him, undeterred, forcing him to grunt and dig in.

"Hey!"

His heels pushed back into entrenched earth, plowing up a widening rim as Cynder pushed him back. Having been gentle out of camaraderie until then, the dragon huffed, grit his teeth, and actually started to push back, in earnest.

"So that's...how it's gonna be..."

Biceps big enough to homestead flared and bulged, his forearms cording to startling degrees of definition. His massive shoulders swelled out as his pectorals clenched in, stretching its plates loudly. His thighs distended, even as they tightened more and more densely, and in seconds the heels stopped their retreat. He held fast, and in so doing, held *her* back.

"*Unhand me,*" Cynder rumbled, short and blunt. Her eyes remained forward, unblinking.

"N-nope," Spyro grunted, not using all of his muscle, but enough of it to have to concentrate. The once-tiny dragon was strong enough to catch a small mountain, now, and she was roughly tantamount to the task. "You need to wake up, is what! We need to g...get home!"

"*Little fool.*"

"Excuse me!?" Spyro barked, a flicker of anger sparking. It wasn't just the words that struck, it was their source. He could have heard that from plenty of villains, but from her, even having only known her so long, that hurt. "I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that—"

Again, Cynder pushed forth, persisting, and Spyro did the same, until the movement pushed her colossal bosom out into his head, their under-curves pressing and jostling against it. The heat of Spyro's anger shifted, flushing his cheeks with unbridled embarrassment.

"*Mmmf!*"

"*MOVE.*"

"HMM MMF!"

Both his massive arms slipped into an awkward embrace around Cynder's waistline; the huge dragon redirected his stance and started to push Cynder back, one slow, stubborn step at a time. In lieu of a retort something else came out, and the moment it impacted Spyro's back he wound up being the one to roar.

"GAH!"

A blast of shadow flame hammered the bulky dragon, volley after volley. The first blast burned, but the second and third began to break in, sizzling his scales, penetrating.

"Stop!"

"RELEASE ME!"

"AH, NUTS TO THIS--"

With diplomacy out Spyro heaved back, pulling Cynder with him. Cynder's vacant eyes still managed to widen in surprise as Spyro's bulk contracted, yanked, and hefted the 320-foot giantess clear off of the firmament. For a surreal second she was airborne, then hurtling face-first in a mean arc, her horns, head and neck bashing down as Spyro pile-drove every curvy inch of her into the turf.

"Was tired of talking, anyway," he panted, rolling his shoulders. He took a few wobbling steps back, put hands to knees, and caught his breath. He glanced over at her colossal body, nearly upside-down, her shoulders to the ground, her head below. "Still...sorry. Sorry, sorry."

She wasn't moving.

"Cynder?"

Spyro popped his back, then stood upright and advanced, only to stop again; something very small was nearby, where he was sure it hadn't been before. On closer sight, it was a smooth-skinned creature, bipedal, very similar to the three fairies. A human!

He was atop a horse, and was gazing incredulously at the both of them. Spyro stared, and he stared back, until a stirring in the soil interrupted. Both parties watched as the bigger dragoness stirred, pulling her gigantic head free of the crater its impact had made. Chunks of debris and soil pattered down as Cynder groaned, shook her head, then rubbed up at her eyes.

"Ugh," she moaned, her huge muzzle wrinkling. "What happened?"

The tiny human below backed away on his steed, dividing Spyro's attention.

"Oh, hey, don't go," he began, trying to balance out restraint with wanting to pounce Cynder in a hug. That she was saying anything other than insults or threats was all he needed to go on. "We uh, we aren't going to harm you! W-what's uh, what's your name, little guy?"

"He's Prince Phillip, Spyro," Cynder sighed, pulling his attention back to her. Her body language was different as she sat on the valley, her head buried miserably between her raised knees and wrapped arms. "He's supposed to help save Princess Aurora. And I was on my way to kill him."

"You *what*?" Spyro repeated, laughing. "Come on. Him?"

Both males watched as a hard sob escaped, Cynder's head sinking lower against her arms.

"It happened," she muttered, sniffing, unwilling to show her face. *"Again."*

Spyro's mouth was opened to speak, but he had nothing in the chamber, so it remained stupidly ajar. He looked down at the tiny Prince, then bit his lip. He kept his voice as low and gentle as he could, though to Phillip, it still came out as:

"SHE'S UPSET, I'M SORRY. YOU'RE PRINCE PHILLIP? THE FAIRIES SENT ME! YOU KEEP ON WITH YOUR QUEST, AND GO SAVE HER! WE'LL HANDLE MALEFICENT, OKAY?"

The smallest of *thank you's* may have been heard as the tiny Prince waved a sword, then rode his horse onward. With that, Spyro carefully put a hand on Cynder's shoulder, leaning in.

"Hey. Ah, I'm not too sure what—"

"There was another dragon, in my version of our world," Cynder explained, between sniffs. "He...I wasn't a good dragon, Spyro. I wasn't, and I did terrible things. I was under his influence, but I still did them. But then I met you, and we, we were a team, and it was *better*..."

Spyro didn't say anything, for once. His hand on her shoulder was all he had.

"Everything was better, with you. Now, I have this amazing second chance, and what happens? I get controlled, again. I even attacked you. I swore I'd..."

Cynder's face rose up, weighted with regret. Her smile fought its way out of that unhappiness, though, and as Spyro helped her back up to a stand, he offered one back.

"It could've been me, or Figment, or anyone," Spyro said, his monstrously thick tail sweeping behind him. "It's nothing you did. You ever want to talk about back then, I'm all ears. You never want to mention it again, I'll talk instead. I'll talk your ears off!"

"Oh," Cynder started, a last sob spiking gracelessly into a laugh. "Yeah, I imagine you could."

"Imagining isn't my job," he shot back, smirking. "And as happy as I am to see you, Figment could probably use our help."

"Right, Figment," Cynder gasped, realizing. "Is he—"

"Yeah. No offense, but let's keep this brief," Spyro interjected. "You knew the Prince."

Cynder nodded.

"Which means, you know Maleficent."

Cynder growled deep, snorting smoke.

"Which means you know the story, thus far, meaning all I gotta tell you is we met the three fairies, they're good, Figment was knocked out, but he should wake up soon, and we blew up the fairies' house, and we need those candies that Diablo stole back."

"Right, I saw them all. But Spyro, Maleficent's *huge* now! She found Ripto when we landed, and you were out cold, and I tried to keep him from being hauled off by the horde, then I fell under her control, she stole Ripto's size, and...did you say, you blew up a house?"

"A magic house, yeah. Can you act?" Spyro asked.

"Can I act? Why?"

"Because if we're all together again, Figment can get us out of this world—and I know how to speed things up, *real fast!* I'll explain on the way, but first we need to catch up with the Prince..."

Several goblin-like sentries atop the kingdom wall spotted Cynder as she *boom-boomed* nearer. One of them turned back to the castle and the ocean of blackened thorns around it.

"She's returned!"

Diablo swooped down from nowhere, the 400-foot tall raven settling over the city streets with a practiced sneer. He jealously watched the dragoness step up over the city walls and let a bulky dragon drop to the cobblestones, cracking them with his bulk as it impacted.

Diablo narrowed his eyes as a much heavier series of thuds shook the streets, until Maleficent's monstrous body loomed up over everything; at 900 feet tall she was so big she could have easily held several older versions of herself in one vast hand. Her self-satisfaction skyrocketed, on sight of Spyro.

"My," she began, cocking a titanic head. "I had expected Prince Phillip, and I've found this colossal idiot from earlier, in his stead! Defeated, no less...tell me, slave...was he so tall and powerful, when you laid eyes upon him?"

"Yes," Cynder flatly spoke. She opened her gigantic hand to reveal Prince Phillip, sans horse. Not that Maleficent cared. "He tried to interfere, but the mission was nonetheless a success."

"Hah-hah!" Maleficent cackled, slamming her huge tail in triumph. "At last, the only lingering impediment, removed! How he fought to escape my clutches...only to return right back to them, so heroically! Yes, most impressive. Well done, indeed. You are mine. The kingdom is mine. These delightful candies are mine! To think, such interference ultimately ensured my victory! The bag! Now!"

Diablo glowered, staring untrusting daggers at Cynder as the horde of goons parted. A single minion hurried along, the bag of rattling candies in tow, and Maleficent signaled for him to stop there..

"Another," she rumbled, opening her mouth wide. Cynder did everything she could not to stop it as a tiny red candy went sailing high, wherein Maleficent snapped her jaws around it, and swallowed with unabashed relish.

"Ah. Now, as for this overdeveloped buffoon," she growled, nodding down to Spyro. "I think I shall enjoy adding him to my...*increasing* glory."

One magnificent boom followed another as Maleficent hauled her towering bulk closer, house-

sized claws digging into the city. One massive hand rose over Spyro, then began to lower, and as Cynder watched...Spyro raised his head up high, and shouted something that made sense, only to him.

"FIGMENT! RETURN!"

"Really!" Blarion laughed, the bearded human setting a kettle of tea down onto the table. "Different colors, is it?"

"Oh, yes," Figment said, smiling wide. "Each with their own effects! I believe going through the portal is what empowered them, and I had a whole bag full! I became a giant, no less!"

The little dragon sat perched upon a stack of books on a chair, in order to properly sit at the table with his partner. Blarion poured himself a cup, shaking his head slowly.

"Such a story! And those three fairies of old, the ones that helped you...you're really quite certain you didn't imagine them, out of the old books? Fairy tales, and the like?"

"Oh, no, this was all real," Figment replied, sipping tea from a gold-rimmed porcelain cup.

Outside, the bustle of midday serenaded the academy, the lab otherwise quiet as the clock in the back corner ticked away. Voices and cars came and went, a jumble of irrelevant noise, yet well-known, and therefore a welcomed old detail. Gads, but it was good to be back.

Figment

Somewhere outside, someone called out, far off and muffled. Figment reached out as best he could across the table for a biscuit off a plate, chalking it up to the songs of the street.

"I won't lie," the little dragon chuckled, scraping the very absolute edge of the treat, in order to pull it over to him. "It was kind of nice, being gigantic! Some things were harder, but others were much, much easier."

"You, towering over me," Blarion mused, considering it. "Huh."

"Over the *whole academy*, no less," he laughed, puffing proudly. "You should have seen me!"

think he's coming around

"I think your friends are calling," Blair said, maybe a bit sadly.

you try waking him, he's as big as a

"Do you think so?" Figment asked, calmly. "Well...what should I do?"

"I can wait," Blair said, nodding sagely. "I don't think they can."

"Who?"

"You be good, Figment."

"What? I don't—"

The clock ticked with a great, sharp click. Light from the sun invaded through the curtain, overwhelming everything, washing out the lab and its safety; with a rough couple of blinks, the great valley and its far-flung castles and three very, very small specks of green, red and blue returned to him.

"I DON'T..."

Figment's voice was enormous as it reverberated through his neck, rumbling him awake, and in seconds the massive dragon snapped upright, making the three fairies all cry out and scatter.

"OH! OH, I...OHHH," he finally sighed, shaking his periphery-filling head.

"Gracious," Flora shouted, having no alternative to communicate. "Such a start! Figment, my dear, are you with us now?"

"GUH," the thousand-plus-foot dragon murmured, yawning. "WAS I ASLEEP?"

"You were, at that!" Fauna added, the tiny green light hovering nearby. A blue one shot in close, glowing intensely bright.

"Forget all that!" Merryweather snapped. "Your friend, Spyro, he went off to get that bag of yours back from Diablo, who's already taken it to Maleficent! We need to go, and go now!"

"THE BAG!?" Figment balked, looming up higher and higher as he staggered to full height. He blinked, looked himself over, then hollered in shock, and it was about as light and measured a cry as an entire army firing its cannons all at once. In a tunnel. "BLARION'S BEARD, WHAT HAPPENED TO ME!? I...I'M ABSOLUTELY...IMMENSE!"

"Nevermind all that, I said!" Merryweather continued, all motion and sound. "Just order the bag back to you, then follow us! At your size, you could swat that miserable Maleficent!"

"I COULD? OH...OH, T-THE BAG, OF COURSE! BAG! RETURN!"

Nothing. Figment had made a bit of a pose, upon commanding, and he held it, as though it were somehow instrumental, until he had to concede that it simply hadn't worked.

"HMM...BAG, RETURN!"

Again, nothing.

"Oh, no," Flora muttered.

"IS IT...TOO FAR AWAY?" Figment wondered, shrugging his vast shoulders as he towered over the forests, between the mountainsides. "IS THERE A RANGE TO THE SPELL?"

"No, there shouldn't be," the tiny blue dot sighed. "That's why this is so bad! Maleficent's surely

placed a counter-spell on the bag, if it hasn't returned to you by now!"

"MEANING...WE HAVE TO GO GET IT, BY FORCE!"

The afterimage of Blarion sitting at the table, telling him he should help his friends, was enough to get Figment storming off, his humongous feet crashing down on the valley below. Well, Blair had said *something* to that effect, Figment was positive.

"Wait, Figment!" the three tiny lights all shouted, cutting in front of him. "Before we go, we need a plan! Maleficent is wicked and cruel, but she's crafty, as well! When Prince Phillip first escaped her castle, Maleficent ejected the entire city's populace with a spell, and took it for herself! They sleep, somewhere unknown, and that gives her a bargaining chip against us! If we were to simply plunge into a confrontation with her and her forces, we—"

With that, the three small dots of color and the massive Figment simply disappeared, blinking out of sight, leaving only a shattered home, snapped forests, and two incredibly large footprints.

A single blink later, and Figment opened his eyes to a medieval city, half-ruined, a thin sheet of homes and stores and inns all sprawling in rows around his massive feet. Ant-like cronies all cried and fled every which-way upon sight of him as caught sight of a very huge, very upset bird, and an even bigger black dragoness, only slightly lesser than himself.

"MALEFICENT!" Figment hollered, startled, as she lurched back in mutual shock.

"Figment!" Cynder shouted, ecstatic, reaching only up to the imaginary dragon's mid-belly.

"Cynder?" he said, looking back around at her, as Spyro leapt up to action.

"GREAT, YOU'RE HERE! COME ON, BUDDY, LET'S FIX THIS!"

"Oh!" Flora said, getting her bearings, a mere dot in front of Figment's looming muzzle. "He did it, and so fast!"

"DID WHAT?" Figment asked.

"I HAD MERRYWEATHER DO A TEMPORARY SPELL ON ME, THE SAME AS YOUR BAG!" Spyro whooped, wasting no time in charging Diablo. The huge bird squawked in shock as the bulky dragon tackled him, full-on. "IT SEEMED EASIER! NOW, GET THE CANDIES!"

"FOOLS!" Maleficent bellowed, sending the entire kingdom into a violent quake. "AS THOUGH SUCH A PITIFUL TRICK WOULD UNDO WHAT I HAVE WROUGHT! HOW DESPERATELY AMUSING! YOU..."

Figment was already on her, and his full size finally registering to the gloating mistress of evil. She recoiled, a flash of panic managing to pierce her cruel humor for one long second.

"WHAT," she thundered, rearing back enough so that Figment could muster a clumsy bear hug around her belly. "YOU AGAIN! HOW DID THE BOTH OF YOU GET SO...NO! THE BAG!"

She broke into a wrestle with Figment, digging her claws in against his sides.

"Y-YOU STOLE IT!" Figment accused. Maleficent's opened maw bore down in response, a field of tower-sized snapping at him. He pulled his head and neck back, narrowly missing her jaws as they crashed together, absolutely intent on a deathblow. "AH, HEAVENS!"

"BE QUIET AND DIE!" she roared, her vast wings beating so powerfully that (unlike the others that had tried before), she gradually became airborne; this, in turn, pulled Figment up until his humongous heels left the city roads, followed by his toes.

It took a moment for Figment to realize what was happening, throughout the rather short trip: *she was growing*. The more her hands dug into him, the more he felt himself starting to diminish, lurching smaller and smaller. He slipped down to 900 feet as Maleficent blew up bigger, ballooning with a throaty rumble to over 1,000 feet. She dug in deeper, enraptured, making Figment yelp.

"Figment!" Cynder started, approaching, only for Diablo and Spyro to roll between, both struggling viciously over crashing storefronts and toppling fountains.

"HE'LL MANAGE!" Spyro roared, pushing Diablo's beak back with all his strength, overpowering the larger avian gradually. "THE PRINCE...GET HIM INTO THE CASTLE!"

She nodded, then tore off past them. Diablo tried to cut loose from Spyro, but the musclebound dragon held him fast.

"NO...YOU...DON'T," he growled, putting the raven into a stranglehold, holding it tight, until Spyro heard a sudden, telltale *gulp*. Something slid down Diablo's throat, and Spyro grunted in agitation. "OH, NO WAY, YOU DIDN'T—"

As the growing Maleficent hefted Figment's body higher and higher in the distance, the raven too began to rumble all over, prompting Spyro to double down and hold him tighter. The bird's wings retreated, without actually shrinking, the waves of feathers starting to crown humanoid arms and elongating legs, and immediately, Spyro understood.

"AH, YOU STUPID BIRD!"

Diablo's eyes closed as his shaking grew worse, and worse, until his feral form snapped and lengthened out, growing fully formed, articulate man-limbs, which burst with throbbing bands of muscle. Two hands grasped Spyro's hulking forearms and began to force his hold further apart.

"AWWWWK!"

"NO!"

Strong as he was, the 250-foot Spyro was having more and more trouble restraining that much bulk, as Diablo blew up from 400 feet to 450, rumbled, huffed, then blew up again to an even 500. The raven's hands swelled too big, until his grip covered even Spyro's mighty forearms. The 530-foot man-bird twisted and flung him off, just before a sparkling set of green, red and blue chains magically snaked around Diablo's growing body, coiling tight, entrapping the massive raven as he bellowed and

topped over with a great crash.

Spyro skidded sideways, passing underneath Figment as Maleficent pulled him higher and higher up on ever-growing wings.

"TO THINK THAT *ANY* OF YOU WHELPS WOULD GIVE SO MUCH TROUBLE," she sneered, as she grunted from the strain of carrying something as big as Figment; even as he shrank to 800 feet, he still proved terribly heavy. "THE ONLY TROUBLE LEFT TO ME NOW IS THE EFFORT OF KEEPING YOU UP! SHALL I RELIEVE MYSELF OF SUCH A TIRESOME BURDENS? OR SHALL I ENJOY YOUR...*COMPANY*, A BIT LONGER?"

"WHY...ARE YOU EVEN...DOING THIS?" Figment growled, kicking uselessly in the air as he trembled and slipped down to 700 feet. "ARE YOU SIMPLY A LUNATIC, I WONDER?"

"HMM," she smirked, narrowing her glowing green eyes to sharpened, nasty slits, huffing happily as she stretched and bulged bigger, surging past 1,200 feet. "AS I IMAGINED. IT WOULD BE FAR TOO GREAT A PITY, LETTING THIS FEAST OUT OF MY GRIP!"

"WAIT—"

She began to tighten her grip, when something caught her eye. Spyro was airborne, leaping and clutching Maleficent's tail and yanking her 1,300-foot bulk down towards the earth.

"UNHAND ME, YOU DOLT!" she boomed, rattling both kingdom and castle.

"DON'T WORRY, FIGMENT, I GOT HER!" Spyro said, flexing impossible muscles. "CYNDER, DOUBLE-TIME IT! GET PRINCE WHATEVER TO THE CASTLE, NOW!"

Before, Maleficent had regarded the trio with a measure of bemused irritation. The moment she heard the plan and saw Cynder carrying a very-alive Prince Phillip to the castle, she let out a sound so hideous that Figment's skin crawled back, attempting to flee it. He dwindled down to 600 feet, then 550 feet, as Maleficent swelled, trembled and burst even more massively, her tail bloating bigger against Spyro's grip; her wings beat harder to compensate for her pumping thighs and surging belly, her weight escalating frantically. Her eyes were round as saucers, burning hot as she screeched bloody murder.

"YOU...*MISERABLE...WRETCHES!*"

Figment went sailing as Maleficent flung him off, a petulant child tired its toy. His remaining 500 feet crashed into an inn, several manors and a parlor, before flumping headlong into a stop. The hordes of underlings scattered fearfully, despite Figment's titanicly adorable features, and as he shook the impact off and looked ahead, he saw.

He saw the one minion there, holding a bag roughly his own size. The candy bag. *His* bag!

"B-BAG, RETURN!" Figment commanded, rising back to his full height. The bag resisted, making Figment growl in frustration as the waves of underlings all broke off into a thousand directions of flight. "ARGH, STILL!? OH, NOT GOOD...PLAN B IT IS, THEN!"

He reached down with a massive hand, scooping up at least twenty goons, including the bag

holder. Figment didn't have a mean bone in his body, big or small...but being *big*, he was able to fake it.

"HAND IT OVER!"

"Eeeeeee!"

The underling practically hurled the bag forward, Figment dropping them all in reflex as he snatched it mid-air. Finding it too small to interact with, however, he now grasped a major problem.

"I CAN'T GET ANY OUT, WITHOUT THEM GOING EVERYWHERE, AND THEY'RE SO TINY," Figment grumbled, furrowing his brows, just as something rumbled and swelled behind him. He turned to see Diablo straining against his chains—no, wait. He wasn't fighting them. If anything, he was clicking his beak in what looked like overflowing joy.

"CHAINS?" he mused, before gasping. "MAGIC CHAINS!? WAIT, STOP! FLORA, FAUNA, MERRYWEATHER!"

Three very small colored dots hovered nearer, inquiring.

"What is it, Figment?"

"THE MAGIC ABSORPTION HE GAINED!"

"Oh, no, he took another one, see? He walks as though a man, now! It's quite alright!"

"BUT THEY MIGHT *COMPOUND*," Figment hurriedly explained, as Diablo shook worse and worse. "HE MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO ABSORB—"

The rumbling raven boom-cawed, unable to help it any longer, as his quaking body exploded even larger. Multicolored sparkling links faded and dissolved into him, feeding Diablo more and more power, so that he burst from 600 feet to 640, then all the way up to 700! His humanoid rump and tail feathers pushed out larger, swelling warmly over a row of homes, snapping, then crushing them down into powder under more and more growing girth. His feet pushed out, clawed toes curling and smashing through the neighboring houses, blowing out through the other side as he flexed his plumed muscles fervently shook, and burst bigger, and bigger.

"Heavens!" Flora cried, as Figment quickly cut in:

"CAN YOU UNDO MALEFICENT'S SPELL ON THE BAG!?"

"W-we can try—" Merryweather spoke, before all three fairies vanished, overtaken and lost as Diablo's huge beak opened and snapped them all greedily up.

"OH, MY," Figment gulped, scrambling away in a panic, as the 750-foot Diablo rolled his huge eyes back in delight and fed on the magical beings. "OH NO OH NO OH NO, COME ON, BAG! WORK! LISTEN TO ME!"

As he stumbled back against the lower city wall, Diablo began to spasm and quake all over, his muscles pulsating, his feathers billowing out in pleasure. His thick talons curled as he shook terribly,

then shook worse, and with a great, echoing *boom* of pressure, erupted larger! His feet surged wider, and wider, yellow-scaled heels swelling over the streets as his thighs blew wider, his hips expanding, his abdominal wall booming out in loud pulses, his pectorals flexing so hard that striations showed under the feathers, as Diablo's height rose past 800 feet...840 feet...870 feet...

Figment backed into, then through the wall, demolishing it with his sheer size, though his 500 feet seemed less and less impressive compared to Diablo's 900. He could have laid down and covered nearly a third of the city, and standing, he could have been seen all the way back to the fairies' home. He glared down, down at Figment, his beak getting progressively pinched by his bulging pectorals, each fist clenching in enjoyment as his back muscles tensed and flexed, raw power pouring off of the 940-foot behemoth.

Maleficent paid no heed to any of it. She was too busy rampaging through the higher tiers of the city, climbing over the collapsing ruins of the nobles' mansions and properties, her scaly belly smashing into the higher walls of the top tier as she chased Cynder down, all fury and death.

"YOU CANNOT!" she bellowed, as every single thorn grew larger, longer and thicker, sprouting up through the devastation her 1,300-foot body wrought. Cynder climbed the lowest outer-rampart of the castle, easily able to scale it at her size, and as she hefted her curves and healthy rump and tail over it, Maleficent's claws slashed by, narrowly missing. "THIS CANNOT BE! NO!"

"S-SHUT IT!" Spyro countered, the muscled male pulling for all he was worth on Maleficent's mammoth tail, to lessening results. "YOU GOT THIS, CYNDER! SHE CAN'T HOPE TO FIT INSIDE, SHE CAN'T STOP HIM ONCE HE'S IN!"

"YOU," Maleficent boomed, turning back suddenly to him, wrath dripping off her words. "I'LL SAP YOU DRY, LATER!"

With a hard snap of her tail, even with all his power, Spyro went flying back. He crashed headlong, bouncing over the middle-tier of the realm, tumbling down with such force that he bashed into Diablo's lower legs from behind, toppling the shocked bird with the kind of resounding crash only 1,100 feet of mass could own.

The cry of surprise allowed three tiny dots to jet free from his opened beak, streaking to higher altitudes. As Spyro wobbled to a stand he turned to see the felled leviathan Diablo had grown into, and turned back to Figment with a toothy grimace.

"WHOA. HE...HE REALLY BLEW UP!"

"SPYRO, THE BAG!" Figment wailed, showing it in his massive hand. "IT'S TOO SMALL TO GET ANY CANDIES OUT OF!"

"DUMP THE WHOLE THING, THEN!"

"WUH-I CAN'T DO THAT, THEY'LL GO EVERYWHERE! ANYONE COULD EAT THEM! IF I CALL IT BACK ONTO ME, I...I THINK IT'D FIT AGAIN, AND GROW TO MATCH ME!"

"HEY, BRILLIANT!" Spyro said, as Diablo stirred from underneath the smoldering wreckage.

"SO, DO IT! QUICK!"

"I CAN'T, MALEFICENT PUT HER OWN SPELL ON IT!"

"THEN...UH...WELL, YOU JUST..."

Diablo forced incalculable tons of brawn up from the fall crater, snorting out a streak of smoke, hands big enough to clutch entire mansions slamming down over the rim, crushing what remained about it, making both giant dragons pause in fear.

"UH...T-THEN, IMAGINE IT *ISN'T* COUNTER-SPELLED!"

"IT ISN'T A CURE-ALL, SPYRO!"

"JUST TRY IT! YOU CAN DO IT! YOU OUTDID THE FAIRIES' SPELL, SO NOW YOU SHOW THAT WITCH YOU'RE EVEN STRONGER THAN HER!"

"AH...HER SPELL IS BROKEN, HER SPELL IS BROKEN," Figment chanted through grit teeth, half-choked with panic, as the far larger Diablo loomed out of the crater; he popped his thick neck and brought a massive fist down on Spyro, smashing him down into the road with terrible force. "AH! I-I CAN USE IT, NO PROBLEM! THE SPELL IS BROKEN! B-BAG, RETURN!"

Still, the bag sat in his open palm.

Spyro reared up through the smoke, planting an uppercut square into Diablo's beak. The titan stumbled back, more from surprise than anything—but it was the full weight of Spyro dropping his elbow onto the bird's foot that truly made Diablo roar in pain.

"WORK WORK WORK, PLEASE," Figment overtly begged as the bag suddenly flashed, then went back to normal, otherwise offering no sign as to any improvement. Had that done it?

You can't call me, Figment, Blarion gently reminded, the afterimages of tea time at the table returning. *Think. You cannot call what's already there. Science is all technicality.*

When the solution hit, Figment could have kicked himself. Of course.

As Spyro put both fists together and slammed them into Diablo's head, Figment took a calming breath, and set the bag down. He backed away, making sure he was fully removed from it, then gave the proper order.

"BAG, RETURN!"

Another flash. When it cleared, the bag was there, hugging him as a child might a protective parent, straps about his huge shoulders, facing his belly, the flap smiling open. It had indeed grown to match, proving the hypothesis right—and, more importantly, giving him candies the size of boulders.

"SPYRO!"

Figment's voice caught his attention as he wrestled with the much-larger bird. He looked to

Figment, just as Diablo's fist raised high overhead. He saw a single, giant-sized green candy fly directly at him, and no explanations were needed; Spyro opened his mouth as he lay upside-down, with Diablo bearing down on him, and let the candy plop in. The swallowing, he could gladly handle.

As Figment dug in the bag for two more candies Diablo let out a bark, as Spyro's great bulk ballooned even bigger, and bigger, and bigger, throbbing and heaving up against him, scales pushing back against feathers. Diablo's admirable physique suddenly paled in comparison to the mounds of tight violet mass booming and stretching into him. His 1,100-foot form slowly inched up off the city ruins as Spyro's pectorals crowded in, inflating disproportionately huge and full, his shoulders bursting, his biceps groaning and flaring as they peaked higher and higher. Monstrous thighs and clawed feet pushed out from under Diablo as Spyro surged up to 400 feet, then 440, trembling with raw power.

"AWWWK!" Diablo roared, flexing as hard as that much muscle could afford, trying in vain to throttle Spyro's widening neck bulk; even at 500 feet, only half the avian's size, even with much bigger, feathery hands, Diablo was unable to compress on that much growing muscle. With a shuddering huff the dragon wobbled and rumbled and blew up even further, inflating to 600 feet, his arms swollen up so big and thick that both of the raven's arms bundled together couldn't have matched them.

"I'LL GIVE YOU...SOMETHING TO...AWWWK ABOUT!" Spyro growled, as his pectorals doubled in size, pushing Diablo away, as Spyro's massive arms gripped the bird's arms, holding him, pulling *and* pushing him as Spyro shook and snorted and billowed up to 700 feet.

"WHEW, THANK GOODNESS," Figment sighed, before he thundered off toward the castle, still thoroughly under siege by the towering Maleficent.

He had done it! He had undone even Maleficent's power, though it took some serious panic and strain in the doing. It was only through sheer adrenaline that he was still moving as he *thoom-thoomed* nearer, quite literally running with it. Maleficent's massive body blocked nearly half the castle as she bellowed and scoured it over with streaks of green hellfire, the foul dragoness blasting everywhere as she snarled and raged.

"YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF DEFEATING ME!" she blast-spoke, her voice like doom.
"NONE! CEASE YOUR RIDICULOUS ANNOYANCE, AND RETURN PHILLIP TO ME!"

More and more brambles and thorns swelled out, swallowing the castle. Great, spiny cords clustered and grew, sealing door after door, window after window, barring every possible passage. Figment craned his neck to see Cynder up beyond, crawling with one hand along the outer castle, Phillip surely in her other hand. Being several times smaller, she was able to avoid the larger dragoness, only driving her to greater anger and frustration.

"INSULT UPON INSULT! I'VE DESTROYED ENTIRE KINGDOMS, THAT REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE ME...WHAT DO YOU THINK I'LL DO TO YOU, AFTER THE TROUBLE YOU'VE CAUSED!? I'VE GONE TOO FAR TO BE UNDONE BY THE LIKES...OF... YOU!"

She was able to drain my size from me, Figment quickly thought. Using her hands. She's too dangerous with that ability, I can't let her get hold of me or anyone, again...so, what if...what if I acted, without getting closer to her? Or...

He started to imagine again, but nearly fainted on the spot. He shook it off as best he could,

though his vision was blurring, and his equilibrium was good and shot.

I'm not good enough at this yet, I suppose. Too wiped out. Need...

Figment opened up his hand, and held an enlarged blue candy, as well as a gold one.

Right. Right! That certainly would do it!

With no hesitation Figment popped the massive blue candy into his mouth, and swallowed it. Instantly, that warm, telltale rumble swelled up within his belly, tickling, tingling; with eyes closed, Figment balled his fists, willing for all he could manage, and *exploded* bigger.

750 feet of dragon muscle bullied into Diablo, and even though Spyro's growth spurt was over, it was clear he was far, far, *far* stronger, and he had no qualms with explaining it. Diablo's fists beat uselessly against his thick, plated pectorals, making only a series of pleasant drum beats as Spyro hugged him tighter, and tighter. When Diablo's feathers fluffed out, this time, it wasn't from delight.

The massive raven cried out and reared his head back, clearly taking aim with the tip of his beak, and Spyro moved his head as far right as his thickened neck could, the beak sailing by and slamming into his vast trapezius instead. Diablo took aim again and Spyro headbutted back, the impact so hard, so strong, that the vibration shot back up through Diablo's massive beak, knocking the colossus out as Spyro let go, and let his limp body crash backwards, shaking the entire tier.

"THAT'S RIGHT!" Spyro hollered, his words booming out from a now-immense, oversized chest. He dusted himself off and stood upright, groaning with untold muscle and power, smooth and dense and swollen with god-level strength. "SERVES YOU RIGHT!"

He snorted dismissively, then looked beyond the arena of their tier. Instead of seeing the rest of the city's sprawl, or Maleficent, or even the castle...all Spyro saw was Figment. Lots and lots *and lots* of Figment.

"...WHOA!"

Figment's eyes stayed closed as he soared larger and larger, ballooning well-past 1,000 feet now. Maleficent heard Spyro's exclamation, and as she turned around, she too gasped. She had done so in time to see a 1,400-foot tall Figment bulging ever-higher, the sounds of his swollen growth spurt echoing out across the kingdom, riding atop the cracks and snaps of the kingdom under his feet.

Come on, body...grow! I'll need every bit of power for this to work...

1,500 feet trembled and blew up to 1,600 feet...1,700 feet...1,800 feet! Figment's muzzle loomed up to match the great height of the castle, thorns and all, then rose higher still; Maleficent gawked as Figment's chest rose to replace her horizon, then his mid-belly, which swelled wider...

Feet as big as theaters consumed more and more of the ruins, crashing messily through everything, his back heel so huge that it pressed into and shoved Spyro and Diablo's forms back as he continued to grow up higher, wider, *boom-boom-booming* to 2,000 feet in size!

He felt his horns pushing out like vast trunks behind his head, his muzzle pushing out longer,

his neck bulging thicker, his rumbling arms and haunches pumping in volcanic eruptions of growth, pushing his stretching body up to over 2,200 feet, then 2,300! Wave upon wave rippled through, as the horrible, wonderful pressure climbed and built and burst, within his straining body!

Even Cynder stopped a moment, clinging to the other side of the back of the castle; everyone that wasn't asleep and vanished watched as the once-puny dragon trembled and hiccuped, blowing up to a staggering half a mile in size! Half a mile's worth of scaled bulk loomed overhead, like Armageddon in the flesh. And it was *still* rumbling all over, from a quaking, hot core.

"INCREDIBLE," Cynder muttered, as the minuscule Prince watched, from between her huge fingers. "QUICK, PRINCE PHILLIP! THERE'S A CRACK HERE...WHILE MALEFICENT'S DISTRACTED, LET ME JUST..."

There was indeed a crack in the outer wall, nearby; she held on with one hand and brought the other hand close to it, allowing the Prince to thankfully slip inside with a wave of a tiny sword.

As the monstrously huge Figment looked himself over, a flash of pink light flared from within the castle, drawing Maleficent's attention back to it. Her transfixed expression melted into such a boiling fury that her previous evil features suddenly looked darling, in comparison.

"NO..." the dark dragoness seethed, shaking with hatred. **"NOOO!"**

By the time Figment could look down over his own belly well enough to make things out, and by the time Spyro could travel around Figment's haunches, it was done. Maleficent brought both her colossal ebony arms tight around the midsection of the entire castle, and began to violently crush in on it, her arms bulging with malicious strain.

"SO SHALL AURORA AWAKEN, THEN," Maleficent snarled, **"TO DEATH!"**

"SHE...SHE'LL CRUSH THE WHOLE PLACE!" Cynder shouted from behind the castle, hanging on tight. "I CAN'T REACH INSIDE AND FIND THEM! FIGMENT!"

Figment loomed overhead, considerably, drawing her attention, as his colossal hand moved.

"HERE!" he spoke, his voice rumbling down into the kingdom, rattling the skies, and shaking its clouds. Before Cynder could ask any questions or object, she saw a huge golden candy fall her way from up above.

She winced for a split second, opened her maw, caught the massive thing, and swallowed. Though her body swelled larger, as expected, Cynder felt her rear and hips disproportionately burst out larger, the base of her tail swelling fatter as the expansion of her stretching rump cheeks forced it up and out. She shuddered, embarrassed, as her already-healthy bust trembled and boomed bigger, rolling and inflating, kissing against the castle exterior, contouring the tower as they kept growing larger.

350 feet trembled and lurched clumsily up to 400, her shoulders spreading wider, her head pushing higher, her thighs expanding to absurd width as she struggled to hang on. Her groaning proved both happy and unhappy as her humongous, overgrown chest boomed through the cracking wall, starting to plump and swell throughout the interior, her teats and swollen areolae blowing through walls and stairwells as they relentlessly grew, filling more and more of the inside, even as Maleficent's

crushing embrace grew worse still. The more Maleficent crushed the exterior, the more Cynder's ballooning chest filled the interior, pushing back against her squeezing anger.

"I SHALL NOT BE DENIED...MY...VENGEANCE!"

With a final, terrible roar, the shell of the castle cracked and crumbled, obliterated to a spray of ruin and debris that caked Maleficent's scales as she roared. All that remained were Cynder's prodigious breasts, which the fell dragoness took no notice of as she twisted her bulk to face Figment.

"FIGMENT, WATCH OUT!" Spyro hollered, trying to get nearer.

"IT IS DONE!" Maleficent laughed, unmitigated delight in her voice. ***"IF IT CANNOT BE TO PROPHECY, THEN I SHALL COMMENCE A NEW ONE! STARTING WITH YOU, YOU TOWERING TWIT! YOU ARE MINE!"***

In a second she was upon Figment, having torn herself from the ruined castle and onto his bigger body. Twice her mighty size, at least, Figment had no trouble bearing her girth, as the enormous dragoness planted both hands greedily on his belly's sides, and began to pull all she could from him.

"NO!" Cynder roared, along with Spyro.

"SUCH AN ABSURD ERROR ON YOUR PART, WHELP!" Maleficent cruelly boasted, as her rumbling body began to fitfully swell larger. ***"BIGGER! FEED MY POWER! I'LL CRUSH THE LOT OF YOU! THEN...I SHALL FILL MY PRECIOUS DIABLO WITH ALL THE MAGIC I POSSESS...ONLY TO FEED UPON HIM AGAIN, AND AGAIN! YOU'VE SAVED NO ONE! YOU'VE...AHHH, ONLY GIVEN ME...MOOOOORE!!!"***

True to form, Maleficent exploded larger, and fast. As Figment shook and blew up to 3,000 feet, she pulled a full 500 back out of him, pumping her groaning black body up to 1,800 feet, to his 2,500...yet, Figment simply folded his huge arms and huffed, before trembling and blowing up to 3,400 feet!

"WHAT'RE YOU DOING, FIG!?" Spyro balked, not sure what to do to help, far below.

"FIGMENT, STOP!" Cynder bellowed, pleading, as they watched Maleficent shudder all over and clutch tighter, booming all the way up to a horrifying 2,500 feet, bringing Figment down to her size in a momentarily even match, before Figment smiled coyly, and rumbled even harder, rocketing up to a full mile! Maleficent grunted in shock as his belly rammed and billowed against her, warm and enormous, inflating so loudly that she couldn't hear the creak of her own arms spreading wider against its sheer girth.

Their gigantic feet cracked and split the city in its center, great hillsides of earth displacing up from unthinkable duress. Even Spyro, approximating 800 feet tall, found himself staring up at both dragons' knees, backing away in fear. Well that he did so, as Figment's larger feet were suddenly overtaken by Maleficent's as the dragoness bellowed, lost in growth-lust, erupting all the way up to a staggering 3 miles, nearly 16,000 feet tall, her horns nearing the lowest of clouds, finally surpassing Figment as he dwindled sloppily down to 2 miles.

Despite the absurd spectacle of it all, Figment looked back down to the faraway firmament,

winking a town-sized yellow eye. Spyro blinked, then cocked his head, baffled.

"COUNT TO TWENTY!" Figment boomed, his feet burdening the landscape with a series of cracks, rustling the trees, and shaking entire mountains, as he and Maleficent shook worse and worse.

"HUH!? WHAT'S THAT MEAN—"

At that, Figment closed his eyes and concentrated for his very life. So much power flowed within him that this time, it only took a moment for the portal to appear behind Maleficent's tremendous bulk.

Consumed by avarice, she failed to notice as it rapidly expanded bigger and bigger, behind her. Both smaller dragons watched from below as the disc swelled to gargantuan proportions, far outclassing the disc that took Ripto with them. When it reached about 4 miles in diameter the strain began registering on Figment's face, as he caught Maleficent in a tight embrace.

"SUCH...POWERRRRR!!!"

Figment dug his tremendous heels into the kingdom, through entire hills and plains and trees; he leaned into her, and forced both himself and Maleficent into the portal, which then vanished to nothing. A wave of displaced air rushed out to fill the void, then returned in silence.

"Cynder?"

Spyro's huge voice was getting closer as she blinked and returned to the moment. She eventually saw him scaling the crushed tiers of the city, reaching both the remains of the castle, and her. She had billowed up in all the ruckus to a mighty 600 feet, just shy of Spyro's *massively* built self.

"You...you're *huge*," she panted, gulping, still reeling from the showdown.

"You t-too," Spyro gasped, only eyeing her double-sized chest for an indulgent instant. It was so big now that he doubted she could even hug around it fully, and lock fingers. He was terribly taken with finding out for himself—until the elephant in the kingdom returned to his thoughts. Rather, the one removed from it.

"Where..." she started, only to blush darkly as small tickling waves rose from within her scaly cleavage, followed by two small humans popping up from within, still intact, still alive. "Wait...Prince Phillip!?"

"And Aurora!" Spyro laughed, tail-whipping around in relief. "She's the only one that was supposed to be left inside. Maleficent didn't crush them!"

"I think...haha," Cynder laughed, unable to help it. "Figment knew! It's...well, a bit embarrassing...but I think I padded them before Maleficent could smash the rest of the castle in, and crush them..."

"But, did he really...did he *really* just take that lunatic dragoness into a whole new world?" Spyro asked, suddenly concerned all over again.

"He must have known what he was...wait, he said something to you, didn't he?"

Spyro blinked, then panicked.

"Ah, yeah! One...two...three...four...five...ah, uh, six...seven..."

Cynder and the two humans watched on, speechless, as Spyro counted up and up.

"...Eighteen...nineteen...t-twenty!"

Nothing happened. They stared at each other.

"He isn't back? Wait, are we stuck here, then?" Cynder asked, her eyes widening in fright.

"He said count to twenty...but then what?" Spyro moaned, pacing heavily around on his two huge feet. "What? What am I supposed to do? I don't have any powers that can..."

He lit up, his wings flaring out, his tail going rigid.

"What?"

"H...haha! Hah!"

"WHAT!?"

"FIGMENT...RETURN!"

There was a flash.

When it finally faded off, there Figment was. He stood roughly 400 feet tall, smaller now than either of them, coughing and hacking as he dusted himself off. He was covered in bruises, and almost fell over trying to stand up straight. But the smile he had on was immeasurable.

"That...was at least fifty," he wheezed, before falling over. He lay there for a time, wagging sluggishly, as Spyro and Cynder and the humans all approached, cautiously, then in joy.

"You maniac!" Spyro laughed, as if it was the funniest thing ever conceived. "You scared us half to death! What happened to not ditching one another!?"

"I figured you'd call me back for an earful," Figment chuckled, sitting up. "While the spell was still in effect. Happily, it was, heh. Otherwise, I'd have been in terrible sorts."

"But...Maleficent," Cynder started.

"She's elsewhere," Figment said, coughing a few times more. "She's the one I ditched."

"Doesn't that mean there's a multi-mile-sized dragoness with absorption powers on the loose, in some poor other world?" she concluded.

"I admit...it took multiple portals...to tax enough size out of us...when we landed in a barren wasteland, I got away from her. We were both exhausted by that point, so escaping far enough away to get pulled back to you without the risk of carrying her along was at least possible..."

"Oh, thank goodness," Cynder sighed, her bust heaving, the two embarrassed humans riding it.

"Well, that was all around *seventeen*, so...there was still a bit of a chase. Lots of fire breathed, nasty words, claws, curses. She really is a mean bit of teeth, she is. But she's *alone* there now. There's no one to feed off, not a soul to be found. I had *extra time* to search and check, while fleeing."

"Look, I'm sorry," Spyro sighed, blushing. For all his overloaded, throbbing muscle, he was unable to stop stammering the rest out like a weakling. "You know, y-you were gone and a-and I didn't, I wasn't...ugh, can we just go?"

"In a minute, please," Figment muttered, slumping down tiredly. "We have a loose end, still."

He weakly pointed a claw back to the gigantic, knocked-out body of Diablo.

"We shall gladly handle that, my friends!"

Flora might have been a mere pinprick to the three of them, but with a wave of a wand too small to see, both Phillip and Aurora vanished from Cynder's vast bosom and reappeared down on the ruins of the city, beside the three tiny fairies.

"I've wanted to do this awhile, now," Merryweather said, as the towering dragons watched on, curious. Small slivers of magic shot forth and collected the rubble and ruin around them. They danced in the air, twirling, flipping, fitting together into a mighty stone shell, encasing the immense raven, which then tightened into a full-on seal.

"Don't worry about him, he's contained," Fauna spoke next. "Not a bit of magic left, he can take nothing from it!"

"Delightful," Figment huffed, nodding down at them all. Even reduced down to four hundred feet in size, he still towered over them all. "Thank you! That's perfect!"

"It's the least we can do," Merryweather said, firmly. "We'll start rebuilding, now that the threat is gone! The awakened people will arrive to help, we're sure."

"Yes, we can handle this much, you've done your parts," Flora added, appreciatively. "Should you three ever end up back here again, please, come and see us! You'll be most welcome, and the kingdom will be...well, *standing*."

In moments, Figment was feeling up to standing again, and his two support pillars were right by his side, just in case; honestly, they just wanted to *be there*. He took a long breath, waved goodbye to the denizens of the awakening kingdom, nodded to Spyro and Cynder, and then concentrated, until another portal struggled open. This one was just big enough for all of them, something manageable, and after they stepped through and vanished, only the humans and fairies remained, to rebuild.

The only party missing in the action was Ripto, who slumbered away in his pit, exhausted,

undisturbed, and entirely forgotten.

5.

"Of all the humiliatin', no-goodin', low-downin', not-right gyps..."

There was a rustling, within the dense forest; to call it a full-on disturbance would have been a monumental act of generosity. The only disturbed thing around was what stormed petulantly out from a small bush, far below the canopy (and, honestly, even that meager entrance had taken a little work). It bore the appearance of some majestic Eastern dragon, if that dragon had been left in the sauna a few weeks too long. Thin, lank and long, he nearly came off as a red-bodied ribbon caught in the breeze, a yellow-gold stripe running the vertices of his belly and tail. A darker nub formed his nose, gold whiskers trailing out past, with pitch-tipped ears and a set of stubby blue horns atop his head. All told, he just wasn't much to tell about, and *that* fact sure had him talking.

"Incense-burner?" the diminutive creature continued, eyes to the ground. He kicked a pebble, and the pebble kicked back, making him rub his toes sourly. "Whoever heard of a dragon bein' a lighter? That ain't a way to treat anything, 'specially a dragon! Which I am!"

No one answered, so he replied to himself:

"Oh, but Mushu, you ain't a real dragon! No, no! You let *one* Fa warrior down, and he gets a little decapitated, and oh, here it comes! Here-it-comes! The insults! From the whole Fa family, even! *Not a real dragon!?* That's some hurtful dialogue! What am I supposed to do wit' that? Don't they know I'm the victim, here? Fa Deng, he dead! Boop! I gotta *live* with this!"

The bite-sized dragon circled and fumed, not quite done with being mad. If anything, his anger was in a comfortable place, and if he had to bear it, at least he could enjoy being on a roll:

"Wasn't even my fault! I can't be guardin' the Fa members every second! The ancestors, *they* sure can't do it, cause they got *me* on the job...which I was doin'! Puh! Havin' a dragon, a *real*, genuine, mighty dragon, lightin' incense...I ain't havin' it! *I ain't havin' it!*"

He yelled the last part out into the forest, knowing he was far enough away that the ancient spirits of the Fa house wouldn't actually hear it. He was mad, not stupid. Finally, Mushu's circling drew in on itself, until he was all-but spinning in place, and he took a seat on a small rock, sighed, and remained there.

"I gotta impress 'em," he said, at length, nodding slowly. "Gotta let 'em see I still got it. Then they'd bein' me back in, for real. Then they'd be sorry! Just...gotta think up somethin' great, somethin'...big...real, *real* b—"

The impact that interrupted shook the entire forest, putting the formerly-indifferent trees on a mean wobble, overhead. Vibrations tore through him, through the rock, through the ground, leaving Mushu with perked-out ears and terribly wide eyes.

"W-what the..."

Scuttling up a tree, Mushu got a better look out beyond the forest, and his jaw went slack.

The very moment Figment landed in the new world, he checked everything. As prodigious a size as the little dragon had blown up to prior, he now found himself fairly comparable to the surrounding forests and hills. The dense canopies rested at about belly-height, putting him down to perhaps one hundred feet, sitting (which, he found, he was). At a full stand, he guessed at maybe 180 feet—not bad, overall!

Next up: the party. He dusted himself off, surveyed the landscape for his friends, and found them both, poleaxed among the forests, laying asleep on a bed of emerald flora and soft earth. A heavy sigh escaped as Figment grinned, and finally relaxed a little.

"Good, good," he chirped, trying in the moment of respite to pop his gigantic back. "Ngh, just...need to figure out where...we are! I...oh, delightful! No more bruising! That's useful to know!"

Spyro and Cynder had been taxed down to a more reasonable level of *gigantic*, as well; Figment guessed him at about three hundred feet, still absolutely packed with tight muscle. Cynder was perhaps two hundred and fifty, say, and her hips, rump and gargantuan chest had kept their healthy proportions. He caught himself staring just one beat past comfort, and cleared his throat.

"Well, it does seem peaceful, here," he murmured, as he patted himself over, and finally realized that the bag was still intact, on him. Figuring there was less urgency and more time to do so, he opened the mutually-gigantic top flap, and checked on the pile of candies within. He nodded, smiling, before blinking, and checking again. "My word!"

He pulled one relatively-normal, huge candy up, examining it between two fingers. His eyes hadn't been playing tricks—the blue piece he held was no long completely blue, but rather, a swirl of partially-combined blue and red! The others looked similar, too, on a better look!

"Amazing! Did going through the portal...combine their properties? I mean, they didn't change earlier...was it due to going through multiple portals, perhaps? How very curious!"

"W-what is?" a heavy voice rumbled behind him, prompting Figment to turn around and face a waking Spyro. He let off a massive, toothy yawn, rolling his shoulders powerfully, as Figment approached, candy demonstrably outstretched in his claws.

"Spyro, look!" Figment answered, as the bigger dragon sat up heavily. "The candy! See that swirl? Well, I think going through a chain of portals did something to combine them! For all we know, that might mean their effects have combined together!"

At that, Spyro woke in full, as if struck with a bolt of energy.

"You're kidding! What is that, red and blue? What's red do?"

"It's what allowed Maleficent to take Figment's size earlier," Cynder groaned, stretching deep as she sat up and shook her head, her chest bouncing slightly. "That's an *especially* dangerous color!"

"Hey," both males happily said, on sight of her.

"Any idea where we are, Figment?" she followed up, before Spyro could insist on trying one.

"Not specifically," he mused, looking up at the mountains and waterfalls stretching up through faraway mists. "Though from Blair's books in the library, I would hazard it to be similar to the far East, perhaps Taiwan, the French protectorate of Cambodia...or Indochina, or even China itself.."

"I don't see anyone around," Cynder replied, standing up to full height, sending broken bits of canopy and wood tumbling down several hundred feet, her massive paws vanishing within the trees around them. "But it doesn't sound like your London."

"Or our realm," Spyro huffed, standing slightly higher than either of them. Once again, in the more affordable setting, Cynder found herself glancing over Spyro's godly bulk, stealing flashes of corded, hulking muscle and thick, swollen pecs. "I know you're figuring out how to summon these portals, but any chance you're understanding how to summon the ones you want?"

"I've been thinking about it, yes," Figment said, nodding with a surprising enthusiasm. "I keep imagining landing back home, yet that hasn't happened, at all. Either it will come with practice, or it...may be beyond me. The only way to find out is to keep trying, really."

Instead of being disheartened, Spyro snorted, then grinned, slapping his huge hands together authoritatively.

"Right! Are you feeling up to opening another one, then?"

"Well, I *think* so," Figment mumbled, rubbing his chin. "Last time, we couldn't just up and leave...but things do seem quiet here, and I suppose nothing is stopping us from it..."

"What's on your mind?" Cynder asked.

"I haven't had time enough to understand one thing," Figment sighed, narrowing his eyes. "I have no idea if there's any methodology to our itinerary."

"Our *what*, now?" Spyro balked, not bothering to pretend at keeping up.

"The path we're on. I can't figure out if there's a reason for the order we're traveling in, or if it's purely random. If the latter, then I suppose we could hop about, willy-nilly...but if there's some greater purpose, it would suggest that each world has a point...not only for appearing at all, but for *when* it appears."

"If you're thinking this world is important, and we have to stop and find a meaning or goal to each and every one, this could take forever and a day," Cynder countered, gently. "It could be that each way-point is that, a hub. Some may prove more important than others. Besides, do you really think there's some greater force at work, in all this? Didn't you start the chain, yourself?"

"Heh, I suppose I did," Figment chuckled, blushing. "And certainly, nothing from around here seems to be intruding on the very-conspicuous sight of three giants in committee. You may be right, it's probably safe to just move on, and save time. I'll keep thinking of home, throughout, of course."

The other two dragons nodded, content on the consensus. Spyro made a gesture with a hand.

"Hey, we're with you, there. Let's get moving, if nothing's going on here. I'm fine with a place being peaceful, and lacking murderous lunatics and evil birds, I'm happy to move along peacefully."

"Seconded," Figment added, turning to face away from them. He worked up his focus, closing his eyes, as the rest of the party watched in fascination. That fascination tumbled into a limp quiet, as a minute passed by, and nothing happened.

"Uh," Spyro started.

"Heh, still a bit drained, from that many portals, I imagine," Figment admitted.

"Well, don't put it *that* way, or you'll end up being right," Cynder offered. "Why don't we just give you a minute or two to rest?"

"Yeah, imagine you're all better," Spyro added, grinning. Instead of Cynder chiding or correcting, this time, both of them looked expectantly to Figment, who shrugged.

"I'm...all better," he said. Even he adopted the same look, as though waiting for an answer from himself. With no real change, he tried again, more confidently: "I'm all better!"

He felt the candy bag shift for a moment, but nothing else. Perhaps he had moved more than he thought, in his efforts.

"Try it now!" Spyro said, rubbing his humanoid hands together. "I bet that did it."

"Right!"

Again, Figment closed his eyes, and put everything he had into it. This time, a portal did indeed flash forth, widening and stretching larger and larger, getting closer to their towering sizes. Cynder started forward, ready as anyone else to depart, but it was Spyro that stopped her.

"Look," he murmured, not wanting to startle Figment. Cynder stared with him into the portal, and gasped. Where other portals had simply been discs of energy, this time...this time, a translucent image began to sputter into focus, and what sputtered into focus was what commanded Spyro's full attention. "See that?"

"I do! Is he...focusing on a specific place? Successfully?"

"It's more than that," Spyro said, beaming. "Look! It's home! He's doing it!"

"Ah," Figment hissed, his eyes still closed, as the image started to fade off, leaving only the vague and indeterminate swirl of energy. "I...gah, I felt something, for a minute..."

By the time both of them were by Figment's side, though the portal remained, all trace of their home world had faded. Spyro cut Cynder a quick look of worry, and found her hand on his huge shoulder, giving it a light squeeze, before Figment opened his eyes.

"Oh, good! I thought I had lost it! Are you ready to leave?"

"Yeah," Spyro answered, forcing a smile. "Yeah, let's git."

Cynder patted Spyro one last pat of reassurance that he'd done right by not fussing; after all, even Spyro had quickly concluded that they could fill Figment in, after successfully jumping. He rallied in record time, and with that, all three stepped through, leaving the old world to the same quiet in which they had found it.

6.

Foolishly, some part of Spyro had kept enough of the notion that they would still arrive in his world around to play with, as they traveled between worlds—not that the trip was a long one. What awaited the trio of giants was, in fact, not his world at all. It was immediately a foreign one, and this time hiding his dejection was impossible.

"Ah, we had it," Spyro huffed, standing up to a newly-taxed height of 150 feet. The buildings around them were a helpful unit of measurement, given how the rooftops of old-world inns rose up to about his shins. "We were so close!"

"Close?" he heard, as Figment approached, standing at about 90 feet tall. The smaller giant looked around here and there, already processing. "Close to what?"

"We might want to talk elsewhere, you two," a 120-foot tall Cynder suggested as, at their still-impressive heights, it took a moment to properly hear it; a moment's focus changed all that.

"Dragons!" one voice shouted, rising above the ruckus down below. A few others followed:

"Everyone, run!"

"There was more than one of them!?"

"Help!"

"Foul beasts—"

"Fetch the knight—"

"Ah, yeah, we just might," Spyro gulped, as small stones began to pelt pointlessly at his thick muscles and stretched-out scales. "Sorry! Sorry, everyone!"

"Y-yes, apologies," Figment stammered, blushing high up overhead. "Entirely our mistake, we'll b-be on our way!"

"Pardon," Cynder started, not bothering with whatever the rest could have eventually been. Instead, she pushed onward, nudging into both males with a single breast colliding, then pressing into each of their backsides. It did what it needed, and both parties jolted ahead, plate-eyed. Feet narrowly missed buildings, fleeing villagers, and each other, the shuffle forward as awkward as possible.

The pelting continued, though even the little humans below really should have known it was purely academic. Some very determined soul down there managed to hurl a barrel, and while it hardly hurt, Spyro felt inclined to acknowledge it with a fake *ouch*, out of respect. The anger and fear and general fuss managed to dog them all the way along, down the side road, out into what likely was the business district, past wobbling shops and tents, all the way to a surprisingly high wall, which they took turns helping on another over (as going through that tiny gate was a no-go).

While some damage was wrought on the stone wall, in the climbing, all Figment could think to do to mollify it was to turn back to the jeering crowd on their side, wave, and smile weakly.

"Lovely place," he offered, as a flaming arrow finally whizzed by, making him yelp.

"So, first observation," Spyro sighed, trying to sound as composed and sharp as he could. "They have a dragon of their own, here. And it is *not* liked."

"It is kind of a running theme, now that you mention it, with dragons," Cynder added, as the party thudded far off enough that the boos and hisses subsided, leaving the sounds of nature and heavy footfall to fill the gap. "I mean, aside from that last world. That had nothing going on."

"Other dragons being around shouldn't have much to do with our purpose, which is to get home," Figment said, looking up somewhat to the larger giants. Truth be told (or rather, remembered), it had been a bit of thrill, looming over even them. Ah, well. *There was always more candy.*

"Home," Spyro said, more slowly and deliberately than Figment would have expected. By the time he heavily thumped about to look back, the two dragons were looking both excited and tense at once. "Figment, I was going to tell you once we arrived, but...when you were imagining up a portal, earlier...for a moment, we could see more than just energy, in the portal! We saw our home!"

Had he paid more attention, Spyro might have caught sight of how Cynder flushed darkly at his choice of the word *our*.

"Unbelievable," Figment murmured, awestruck. "It did? I really conjured a specific location?"

"Well, for a moment, yes," Cynder replied. "I think you're getting stronger, and rapidly!"

"Goodness!" Figment laughed, flapping his tinier wings with poorly restrained glee. "I must not have been able to hold it, then. With more practice...I could try again! I think I'm up for it, and I don't see any reason to stay in a world where dragons are hardly popular..."

"The candy," Spyro cut in, staring.

"Oh, it's with me, see?" Figment chuckled, pointing to the bag strapped against his belly.

"No, no, Fig, I mean, *the candy!*"

Down below, rolling meekly away from Figment's shack-sized foot, was a single gigantic candy, caught mid-jailbreak. Figment gawked, then quickly scooped it back up and investigated the underside of the bag. Sure (and horribly) enough, somehow, a decent-sized hole was set in the bottom left corner, and another two candies had mercifully bunched against it from within, preventing any

others from falling out—so long as Figment didn't move.

"How in the world—it's a hole," Figment stammered, flustered. "But...we didn't do anything to tear it, did we? Lord, you don't think that...during Maleficent..."

"No way, they would have been falling out, back in the last world," Spyro said. "This must have just happened, now."

"It looks...*chewed* through!?" Figment balked, increasingly unnerved. "Something was in here! That's the only...see, it chewed out from within, look at the direction of the fraying! Oh, no..."

"What? You don't think something got away...with a candy?" Cynder gulped.

"If so, I think we'd have seen the culprit blowing up to size, by now," Spyro added, snorting. "We should just get going, yeah?"

"But, the hole," Figment grumbled, furrowing his troubled brow. "We can't just skip off, with it leaking candies all about, it would sow chaos! Chaos!"

"Okay, okay," Cynder started, looking around, "we'll...just have to patch it up!"

"With what?" Spyro asked. "You got any giant-sized thread or needles in that bag, Fig?"

"Just the candies...we could try jumping worlds, and I cover the hole with my hand, only...it is a bit difficult to control movement, when spinning around between realities...plus, if my hand moves during the taxing size shift, it could mean we leak candies that way, too. Worse, the hole could widen."

"Gah, it's always something," Spyro huffed, rolling his incredibly thick neck. "I don't suppose anybody back in town has enough rope and needles to thread a bag this big..."

"A dragon tends to be bigger," Cynder replied, at length. "If it's a menace here, it must be plus-sized enough. Maybe...maybe it has something properly-sized, that can fix the bag?"

"I could just uproot some thick tree leaves, and maybe pad the hole...only, if we move around as much as usual, on jumping, it might still be bad enough to rustle them away..."

"Appreciate the thought, Figment, but we should probably just go find the dragon," Spyro sighed, shrugging enormously huge shoulders, making his pectorals and biceps bob heavily, on the way back down. "Time's wasting!"

Figment rubbed his horns with both hands, then worriedly put one hand back down under the bag. Once again, he clutched it from underneath, hugged it up tight against his huge scaly belly, and followed along as Spyro and Cynder set off into the forests.

"Holy Fa, was that close," Mushu panted, resting at last against the boulder-sized ball of swirling colors. Rolling it down the hill seemed like the fastest way to avoid detection from those three gigantic beasts...but staggering a moving boulder was impossible for something his size, so he had been 'wise' enough to let it crash into the surrounding woodlands, on its own. "No way I'd have made myself

big enough, 'fore all three-them could have whupped me flat. But enough of that noise! Haha! Yes, yes, you come here to Papa!"

He patted the gigantic candy, deep dark green and rich gold all about, hugging up into it as it rested between two crushed trees. His tiny tail whipped all about as he slid back off, grinned toothily, then...sighed.

"...Eh. So, uh, how...how do I eat this thing? I mean, piece by piece, oughta do..."

He wasted no time in chipping away at a crack in the side, where it had crashed against the felled tree on the right. Thankfully, picking with his little claws at the cracks, a small chunk did eventually tumble out, still big enough to fill his hands as it landed. Most of what those freaks had been spouting didn't make a lick of sense to him, but he had certainly figured out what counted: these things were candy-treats-and they made you *big*. That had been more than enough to get him into that oversized bag.

"Dragons tend to be *bigger*, huh?" Mushu grouched, mock-repeating what he had heard that chesty giantess-dragon saying. "Then I'm 'bout to show y'all a *real-real* dragon!"

He bit down into the chunk, nearly shoving it up whole into his mouth at the same moment. Swallowing proved more difficult than getting the candy, in the first place-but, in for a penny, in for a pound. That there was no way to get it back out of his throat may have also contributed.

The exhaustion of simply getting it down was replaced immediately, any fatigue or weakness blasted away in a sudden and eruptive burst of energy-no, *power!*

Mushu's tiny body managed two simultaneous feats: his little body blew out with a sudden herd of muscles, all of which swelled into a red-gold crowd, his shoulders ballooning up along his thickening neck, his pectorals pushing his scales out head of him. At the same moment, his swelling arms pushed out, defining somewhat, growing more human-like. His chest pinched up more clearly over the bulge of his torso, as a row of hard abdominal mounds pushed eagerly out. His words caught in his growing throat as his rear bunched out under his fattening tail, his knees wobbling as his thighs blew out, and his little calves bulked up under them, on a slight delay.

"Ah," was about all he got out as his eyes closed, his back popping from its usual insistent 'S' shape, into a taller, straighter, slighter curvature, and in the elapsing seconds, he had come to stand like any grown man might. As he did, more importantly, he *grew*.

One blink, and Mushu stood a whole two feet in height, enough to make him pitch for balance as his muscles outpaced him steadily. He blinked again, and saw the bushes that once towered over him lowering submissively, yielding, as he rose higher than them, and higher still. Three feet trembled and tickled its way to four, then five, and Mushu's clawed little feet dug into the soil, in abject joy.

"Huh...h...hah," he finally managed, one gasping laugh escaping, before he closed his eyes again and started to rumble even more, from even deeper, "Hah! Wahahaha, yessss!"

By the time he stopped growing, the lingering afterglow of electric power proved enough to leave him giddy. This did not diminish, especially when he looked his seven-foot tall body over. His clawed red hands remained, attached to a bulky, powerful arm, and there was no way he could resist

flexing it, just to see the peak of a newly-formed bicep.

"Oh...oh, yeah," he crowed, his thickened tail lashing and curling in delight. "Haha! Now this! Y'see, this, here! That is more like it! Who's lookin' very dragon, today? Oh, is it me? Well, I thought so, thank you for noticin'! And I—would you look at these!"

He finally saw his pectorals, each one twitching at his attention.

"I can't even see past these!"

He poked one huge pectoral, testing, and it swelled out tighter, heftier, proud and huge, and his powerful tail went from whipping to *hurricane*.

"Man, I could left Fa Deng right over my head! Head included! I'm bigger than an army strongman! Oh, you want attention, too?"

He flexed both hulking biceps, and laughed stupidly as they seemed to stretch tighter, yet, peaking even higher. His red lats flared enviously, and at last, Mushu just couldn't contain his joy.

"Ahahaha! I finally look as good as I knew I was! And oh...oh, we're just gettin' started!"

He turned back to the candy, still looming larger than him. This temporary fact did nothing to dull his smile, as he made a tight fist, reared back, and punched the boulder-sized orb, *hard*. Even without having thought to attack the cracks on the side, it made no difference. A confused web of cracks shot out from the impact point, and the entire front half of the candy exploded apart, cracking into numerous bits.

"Whoo! Ooh, all of you, you come here! Come here! I got enough attention for all y'all!"

Chunks that moments ago would have needed both arms, he now held in clusters, in each hand, and each hand shoved those clusters into his mouth as he ate, and ate, and ate. Mushu sat hunched over his own inflated bulk, giddily feeding, already feeling it happen: as he gorged, his huge back muscles trembled and swelled out with renewed pressure, bloating higher and wider overhead, forcing the arch of his back to bulge higher. His shoulders boomed out, growing from comparative pumpkins to outright boulders of their own, as his pectorals crowded uncomfortably bigger, inflating loudly, swelling tighter as they billowed into each other, caged by his swelling red biceps and triceps.

Little dragon

The sneering disdain of the family spirits returned, and the twenty-foot tall Mushu ate even faster, spitefully gulping bigger and bigger pieces of candy down. His scaly thighs burst twice as thick on either side as he stayed crouched, starting to compete for space with his bulging calves and swelling feet, as his back muscles boomed even greater overhead. His tail sprouted out behind him, longer and stronger and fatter, as his neck doubled in width.

Not a REAL dragon

His ruby shoulder blades heaved massively as he ballooned up past forty feet, then fifty, his monstrous back muscles pushing into whole trees, throbbing bigger still, shoving angrily into them,

until limbs cracked and snapped away. At eighty feet, his hunched back and shoulders and biceps all began to forcibly push entire trees back, uprooting them as he snorted and ate faster.

You're nothing but a lighter!

Though he had made that last one up, it felt close enough to base to keep him shoveling every broken bit of candy into his growing maw; a hand big enough to grab and hold a horse like a toy clutched at the rest of the boulder-candy, and he crammed the whole remainder into his mouth. With a last gulp, the hunched mass of red scales and muscles trembled and shook, tightening in on itself, rumbling terribly...before rocketing *bigger!*

A massive swell of bulk blew up through even the highest of old treetops, quaking and twitching, before inflating further out, the bulky 200-foot behemoth of a dragon erupting hotly to 250 feet, then 280! Mushu groaned down into his yellow pectorals, feeling them boom up bigger against his chin, smothering up larger and tighter against his muzzle as he rumbled and grew even larger, still.

When he finally stood up, balancing upon vast, swollen legs, Mushu threw his chest out, colossal arms back and bellowed a booming cackle of complete victory, carelessly shaking the landscape underneath.

"YES!"

His voice was a cannon blast, pure thunder. He was so powerful even his words shook his mighty neck, as they echoed out through the air:

"HAH! HOW'S THIS FOR REAL!? JUST Y'ALL LOOK! YEAH, LOOK!"

He took his own advice and checked his body over, beyond elated. He stood over four-hundred and fifty feet tall, and had more muscles than he could begin to count! Even relaxed as he could be, his biceps remained massive and pumped, his thighs heaving and ready for use. Even the base of his tail felt enormous as it rested atop his rear, like have a great oak attached to it. It was not unwelcome.

"NOW," Mushu huffed, dusting his massive hands, "JUST GOTTA PULL OF SOME SORTA FEAT, SOMETHIN' REAL MIGHTY-LIKE..."

His huge ears perked rather cutely, despite his new size and bulk.

"HEY, YEAH...ALL THOSE VOICES SHOUTIN' AT THEM, EARLIER...THEY GOT A *DRAGON* PROBLEM...I BET I COULD DO THE WHOLE HERO-THING, AND BRING ME SOME HONOR! AN EMBARRASSMENT OF HONOR! OHO, MUSHU, YOU LITTLE...YOU GREAT, BIG GENIUS!"

Given how the three giants hadn't all stormed over to investigate the fuss he had created, Mushu was plenty-sure they had already gone off looking for the dragon, too. At their size, they didn't exactly have indoor voices, so he had still heard what he needed to, even as he had been escaping.

"ALL I GOTTA DO IS FOLLOW THEM, AND POW, I CLEAN UP! HERO-DRAGON MUSHU, PRIDE OF THE FA CLAN! SHOOT, THE PRIDE OF CHINA! HAH!"

Sure, the stray villager or traveling merchant or grazing livestock or laboring serfs might have

caught sight of him as he thudded and thoomed his way along, each foot bigger than an Inn. Mushu knew. If anything, it just made him prouder, not noticing the way his entirety continued to swell...

"Do you two hear that?" Cynder asked, finally, glancing back at her comrades.

"Yeah, I thought it was just me," Spyro chuckled, looking around quizzically.

"It sounds like...singing," Figment added. "It's pretty good, too."

The trio had made tracks along the lower valley, beyond what seemed to be the kingdom, and had found themselves in a much more open one, all hills and dales and unspoiled green plains. Rock faces rose and played in the ocean of grass, far off, and from behind one of them, near a wide, winding stream, they could hear it. Someone was indeed singing, a large, powerful falsetto, if one were to believe it. Cynder spoke up first:

"I think it's by the stream...I don't think a little human could manage that volume, so...what do we do? If it's the dragon, do we just walk up and introduce ourselves?"

"Seems the polite way to do it," Figment agreed, already marching off towards the sound.

"I didn't mean right away," she moaned, as Spyro shrugged, and followed after.

Even having been reduced in size, several times, they were still towering giants, and the ninety-foot tall Figment was duly reminded, the moment he rounded a tall ridge among the hills, and found himself looking down at a fully-grown dragon. This particular specimen must have been about twenty feet tall, tops, big enough to shower in a small lake formed by the runoff from a waterfall riding the ridge. A sort of off-green body met a swath of yellow belly and neck scales, a slender muzzle pushing out as the pear-shaped dragon sang away, unimpeded. Two dark-green tufts jutted from his head, swaying in time with the tones of his song, like metronome hands. The singing was certainly from him, but that was about the only answer Figment had to work with. For everything else, there were only questions:

This is what the villagers feared and loathed?

How would he interrupt, in the most polite way?

Was that him shifting into a soprano, just now?

"Ah," Figment started, clearing his throat. The smaller dragon continued on, not noticing, too caught up in pantomiming some violin solo with his own spade-tipped tail. "Beg pardon...hello?"

The dragon's head bobbed and swayed, lost in rapt gusto, before it swayed further out on his long neck; his eyes opened—then opened wide.

"H-heavens!" he bellowed, fudging the last note. In an instant, the tail had gone from violin to shield, as he hugged it into himself. He looked out from his shower at a massive pink-ish wall of belly scales, then craned his sights up, up, up to Figment's smiling muzzle. "HEAVENS, ME!"

"Afternoon, friend!" Figment chirped, blushing darkly. "I ah, h-heard your singing, and—"

"Gracious, all," the dragon hollered, unblinking, absently letting the waterfall splash over his head. "A g-giant! A dragon! A giant dragon! I-I didn't know they came quite so big, goodness! I, well...ah, heavens—d-do you mind!"

A hint of indignation crested his shock, his voice high-pitched and affected, bordering on effeminate. To Figment, it actually seemed to fit him quite well. The smaller dragon pivoted away, eyes closed, chin up; he put his arm out and swirled a circle with his finger, insistent.

"OH!" Figment gasped, thudding heavily on the grass as he turned about. "T-terribly sorry!"

"Yes, yes," he heard the dragon brusquely chatter, as it easily walked out of the lake, and over behind a high crowd of rocks. "No need to apologize, no need. Simply a shock, is all it is! Goodness, my heart! You must excuse me in kind, I should say. I must say! Oh, to see..."

He peeked back out from the rock face, having finished rubbing himself dry with his tail.

"Ah, it's quite alright, do turn about!"

Figment was still blushing, as he did so, an awkward grin incorrectly stuccoed to his face as he began to reply:

"Yes, well, we aren't from—"

"...one so tall as yourself, around here! Oh, I say, I get no company, here, none at all! My, you hardly seem full-grown, at that! Isn't that everything!"

The dragon strolled up on surprisingly light feet, coming up to only Figment's lower belly, at best. As he did so, Figment felt the approaching tremors of Spyro and Cynder as they appeared on the other side of the ridge, looming even larger than he.

"Ah, my friends and I—"

"Oh, you must be famished," the dragon clucked, smiling wide already. "I say, I'm not at all certain you would fit terribly well inside, but I do have a cave right there, very nice one, should you care to—AH!"

As the dragon spoke, he turned to point to a fairly large cave opening, nearby, upon the rise of the hill; that was when he noticed the two far larger, thicker dragons, on the opposing side of him, looming casually. Figment tried to bridge the gap.

"These are my—"

"MERCIFUL HEAVENS!" the dragon cried, hands to his head. "A gaggle, no less!"

"Hey," Spyro said, waving a massive hand cheerfully, and pointing to himself. "Spyro. This's Cynder. That's Figment. What's your name?"

The dragon sort of stopped everything, locked into a defensive stance, up on tiptoe, on one foot. He regarded Spyro, looking him over, then Cynder, then back a moment longer to Spyro.

"C-charmed," he sighed, eyes narrowing. A moment longer, and he began to slip back down onto both feet. "A p-pleasure."

"Likewise," Cynder added, quickly. "We're so sorry to impose, but...we're travelers, and we need a moment of assistance, if you would be so kind. Figment, here...that large bag he's toting with him, it has a hole, and we can't have it leaking contents as we travel..."

"I should think not," the dragon said, nodding.

"We're wondering, do you perhaps have anything that can be used to mend it?" Figment asked, leaning down closer, in an attempt to hopefully appear less imposing. He showed the dragon the hole, and the dragon looked it over, seriously. He clapped his yellow-palmed hands together and beamed, the tufts on his head perking high.

"My dear boy, I do! Not to boast, but I do fancy myself a bit of a craftsman! And a poet, no less. Yes, come, come. My cave is where I said, do follow! You know, it is rather a nicety, having company! Oh, I could host again! My, yes! Do come!"

"He seems nice," Cynder offered, cocking her head some.

"Works for me, if he's got food," Spyro rumbled, grinning. "Haven't eaten anything for awhile, now, come to think of it."

"You're right, we haven't," Figment wondered aloud, as they trailed along behind the dragon. "Aside from the candies, I mean."

Given that the opening to the dragon's cave stood about fifty feet high, Figment was the only one capable of fitting inside it—barely. He had to squeeze in, while holding his breath, which jostled the candy bag something fierce. Several candies cracked from the force of being ground against the sides of the aperture, and though Figment found the interior to be much higher and roomier, he still had to crouch some as he entered. In so doing, the oblivious traveler swung about slightly, not realizing that several chunks of candy slid loose from the hole, tumbling into a large cauldron full of liquid set over a fire, warming a cozy hearth. Immediately, the large chunks dissolved, melting into the mixture from sheer heat.

"It's a lovely place," Figment said, as the dragon bustled about in what seemed to be a pantry. He tried to take as unimposing a seat as he could, there by the warm fire, as the dragon reappeared, promptly setting a long wooden table with sandwiches and fruits and several good-looking cakes. "Thank you for having us!"

"Oh, no, no, don't bother mention, my boy," the dragon chuckled, blatantly delighted. "What sort of dragon doesn't parlay with the universal language of hospitality? Second to music, second to poetry, yes! Ho ho!"

"Well—"

"And certainly don't you worry for your great big friends! Oh, how lovely! Haha, I'll have food right out to the both of them, as well, of course!"

"Thank you!" Spyro rumbled, from outside, the sounds of his thick tail beating the ground making the dragon laugh. Well, it was somewhere between a laugh and a high-grade titter.

"Of course, of *course*, all my pleasure, really!"

As soon as the table was set, Figment cleared his throat and motioned to the bag, smiling.

"As to the bag, if I can mention—"

"I've just the very thing, my boy!" the dragon chuckled, almost chiding, as though graciously choosing to undercut the implication that a host as good as himself had forgotten. He vanished around a corner, then returned, using the firelight to show a large femur, snapped into a fine needle point, and polished down smooth. A length of rope threaded down past it, into a coil that the dragon held in the other hand. For his size, it roughly equaled a humble needle and line.

"Oh, a bone," Figment nodded. "Very clever, using prey to double as a tool!"

"Prey?"

The dragon bore a bit of a soured look, before shaking his head with a very clear series of *tsks*.

"Really, now! Such a barbarous notion, I won't have it! You see, these nasty things were cluttering my cavern, when I first made it a home. Terrible business, so morbid. Gracious Saints, I would never, dear me, no. Now, do hand that bag here, boy, quickly. Observe!"

The enthusiasm crept back in as Figment offered the huge bag over, setting it down near the dinner table. Spyro and Cynder's huge muzzles crept into view, as well, as the both of them watched from outside of the entrance.

"Hope you don't mind," Spyro began, only for the dragon to put a quieting hand out, as he sat before the bag's corner and hole.

"Mind? No, no, not at all! I rather think you'll enjoy! You, Figment, my boy, eat, eat! Pass those along to your lovely friends, I insist! Ho ho!"

"Thanks!"

Figment did his best with massive hands to carefully move a mess of sandwiches and fruits out, able to reach just far enough that Cynder's more slender arms and hands could take them, and pass them to Spyro. All the while, the dragon gladly sewed the hole, suturing it shut with what Figment had to agree was a masterful surety. All *that* while, he recited poetry, Figment doing his best to listen:

*To and fro and back, one sews
Time may tear, and there, lay low
Though one may mend—if how, one should know
So as to heal what was then aghast*

Here, a present, sutures passed!

Just like that, the deed was done, and easily. Given the past several worlds, it was beyond pleasant to have such smooth resolutions available. Plus, the tiny cakes and sandwiches, while insufficient on their own, proved rather good, in heaps. The dragon bit the line off, then gave the mended hole a good matronly pat.

"And there you have it," he chirped, deeply pleased with himself, on all fronts.

"That was quite the recitation," Figment said, applauding. Spyro and Cynder could be heard doing the same, outdoors. "You made that all up just now?"

The dragon nearly swelled out with the praise.

"Yes, well, I thought you might like it!"

"I've got one!" Spyro added, his muzzle visible as a toothy grin. *"There once was a gnoll from Atoll—"*

"Spyro," Cynder barked, cutting him off.

"You know that one, too?"

"We can't thank you enough," Figment interrupted, giving as much of a bow as he could, wedged inside the cave as he was. "That's lovely work! You've been very kind, eh..."

"I'm a dragon, my boy, call me as such," he chuckled, moving past the bag. "It really is no trouble, none at all! It's all my pleasure, having good company! Pray, tell: where do you three souls hail from? Some land of giants, I might suppose?"

"Heh, not so much," Figment replied, as the dragon scooped up a large kettle, filling it with the contents of the cauldron. "We all come from our own places. Mine is called London. I think you'd enjoy it! We have science and arts, and afternoon tea and biscuits, and—"

"Well! You won't find any tea quite so pleasant as this, my dear boy," the dragon interjected, setting a very large, very full kettle down on the table. He had already arranged a very elaborate tea set across the table, and was pouring himself a cup, then one for Figment. "Go on, enjoy!"

Figment reached down, trying his best to pinch his huge claws around the teacup without breaking it. This, naturally, took a moment, and in that time the dragon sat happily down at the end of the table, fixed a healthy slice of cake, and started to eat.

"This is a beautiful spot for a home," Figment began, as he tried to get hold of the cup. "Though, isn't it a bit remote?"

"I enjoy the privacy, quite," the dragon laughed, swallowing his cake in ample bites, until it seemed to catch in his throat, making him cough some into a polite fist. "I...mmm..."

"I don't suppose you come across any villagers, then?"

"Oh, no, no, they...mmm, pardon! I can't say I've seen so much as a soul."

"You think they mind you, then?" Figment ventured, pressing slightly.

"Ho ho, not at all! I haven't an enemy in the w...hmm...mmm, excuse me, I, ahah, seem to...have a bit stuck..."

At that, the dragon took his cup of tea and downed it, then cleared his throat. He appeared flummoxed a moment, then sighed and grabbed the kettle. A small coughing fit erupted, and though he looked at the tea cup a moment, the dragon ultimately chose the latter, and brought the entire kettle up, gulping the whole thing down in seconds.

"Oh!" he coughed, thumping his belly with his fist as mannerly as he could. "Dear, me, pardon! Oho, my, how utterly boorish! I..."

A loud gurgle cut in, from deep within his huge, round belly, so strong that it rattled the table, making the tea cup dance away from Figment's claws.

"Gracious, was that me?"

The dragon blushed, then gasped, as a deep rumbling tremor began to rise up from within him, to the point where he closed his eyes and shook like a scaly cataclysm. Figment blinked, slowly, watching on a few seconds, then rearing back in surprise as the dragon only quivered worse, then began to noisily expand bigger...

"What," Figment muttered, only to cry out as the dragon's entire rounded body suddenly blew up larger. His rump and hefty tail bulged down into the cracking chair, splitting it, letting his rumbling bulk crash to the floor of the cave.

"Oh," the dragon hiccuped, covering his mouth, before his arms and legs abandoned their feral formations, his forearms lengthening, his shoulders puffing into mounds of increasingly-defined muscle. His belly mass surged up and into his chest, forcing two oversized mounds to burst into view, as his head rose higher and higher on a widening, lengthy neck. "OH, HEAVENS!"

"What's going on, in there?" Cynder asked, peeking in.

"Ah, er," Figment sputtered, as the rumbling dragon's green skin stretched audibly larger, straining to contain the sudden explosion of muscles, as his growing legs pushed out into angles, kneecaps pushing out between a forming set of thighs and calves. Both knees pushed up, up from underneath the table, tilting it upward as the gasping dragon blew up from his former 20 feet to 30 feet, then 40!

The dragon grunted and trembled all over, the remainder of his belly still bulging out enough to start shoving the entire table away, towards the entrance, as his shoulders and biceps boomed bigger, drum-beats of growth throbbing throughout his swelling mass. With every pulse, he billowed out in all directions, inflating and groaning past 50 feet, then 60, until Figment felt the dragon's flaring triceps bulge tight against his belly, the pair starting to overfill the cavern interior as their scales collided and

bulged tighter and tighter together.

"MERCIFUL HEAVENS, W-WHAT..." the dragon groaned, shaking and booming even bigger, his voice dropping bigger and lower and thicker, as his head thumped up into the cavern ceiling, his already-pillar-thick neck bloating up into it seconds later, in turn pinched in by the rising swells of his overgrown pectorals and shoulders. "WHAT...WAS IN...T-THAT...TEEEEEEEA!?"

Spyro and Cynder watched as the end of the table scooted out, out into the open, and Spyro quickly ate everything that was still on it, before a bursting bulge of green scales ballooned out from the cavern, following it.

"Oh, no," Cynder huffed, as the entire cavern began to shake more and more ominously.

Inside, Figment struggled on, trying to get his arm between the cave wall and the dragon's constantly-growing back muscles, in an attempt to get at the bag. He managed to tug enough to where it popped free, the top flap thankfully keeping candies from flying all about, and Figment then tossed it over to his foot, and used his foot to start pushing it out, lest they all be crushed by their combined girth. Big as he was, even Figment was beginning to feel the severity of the pressure, as the dragon moaned and trembled and boomed even *bigger*, inflating ceaselessly larger and stronger, still.

A bicep so big even Figment couldn't hug around it blew up against his face, shoving his muzzle to the side as he felt the dragon's brawn tense in, pectorals and lats and shoulders and thighs all densely contracting, before the confounded dragon bellowed in both shock and delight, and absolutely *detonated* in size. Figment's entire body was shoved back against the interior wall, his scaly purple bulk pushing into the hearth and fire, making him wince as the cauldron tilted enough to allow its attacked lid to swing down, shutting tight.

"G-GOODNESS...M...MMMMMMM--"

The dragon's cave cracked here and there, then everywhere, as Spyro and Cynder started to back away. Spyro gulped down the last of the food, just as a vast swell of yellow belly scales boomed up from an cracking split in the topside. Great segments of rock blew away, raining down, as the whole cave snapped in two, and a vast, towering bulge of growing scales expanded higher and higher and higher, up past either of them.

"I knew it!" Cynder groaned, just as the trembling, cracking cavern exterior finally blasted away, spraying rock and smoke and baked goods everywhere.

When the smolder and ruin finally cleared off, Spyro and Cynder looked straight ahead...then, they looked up. And up. And up. The end of their eyes' quest was at a staggering 800...no, 850 feet, as the towering colossus that was now their new friend wobbled, sitting in place. Where a cave once had been, there was now only the dragon, and what a dragon he was.

"OH...OH!" the dragon barked, looking himself over, then his devastated homestead. Though much of his pear-like girth had elevated up into his massive, heaving chest and billowed-out arms and thighs, plenty still remained, giving him a muscular body and a healthy belly. "OH, MY...MY HOME! WHAT...WHAT LUNACY IS..."

Figment wobbled about, trying to get his balance, as he walked around the massive form of the

dragon, coming to a rest by leaning with a hand against his towering sides. Even sitting down, the dragon made Figment look like a stuffed toy, to be cuddled on with both arms (though those arms were so vast, they could have hugged a whole castle). Spyro and Cynder both stepped back, mouths wide open. The dragon patted himself over in shock, then patted his chest a second and third time, before flexing a green bicep so thick that it peaked up past his head. A strange marriage of thrill and disdain warred inside him, and the look on his face matched perfectly.

"I...I'M SO BIG," he boomed, albeit still effeminately, feeling a neck thicker and longer than the road into town. "OH, MY VOICE! IS THAT MY VOICE? IT'S RATHER LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE, ISN'T IT! MY, MY!"

He batted his huge eyes, looking the area over, and his concern switched instantly.

"OH...OH! M-MY BOY! FIGMENT? ARE YOU THREE QUITE ALRIGHT?"

"W-we're alright!" Figment's voice answered. That the humongous musclebound dragon sighed in relief was enough to start putting the three of them in relief. From up high, the dragon's head appeared, looming beyond the absurdly-wide, thick shelf that was his scaled chest. "Are you okay?"

"AM I...I AM CERTAINLY NOT!" he boom-spoke, tilting his chin up indignantly. "MY HOME IS QUITE THRASHED, MY BOY! YOU SEE IT! I CERTAINLY DO NOT! I DON'T, AT ALL! WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THIS!?"

"Ooh, should we even explain?" Spyro muttered, eyeing up at the mountainous behemoth. "I mean, look at him! How'd he even get any candy, in the first place?"

"I really don't know!" Figment answered, sincerely. "He had tea, and..."

The math presented itself, and Figment's deductive skills did their share. He covered his muzzle with both hands, then wandered over to the bag and picked it up.

"The hole," he growled, making a little unhappy sneer. "The hole, I was close to the cauldron on his hearth, he must have been boiling tea while showering, and the hole in the bag...some bits of candy must have tumbled in and melted down in the mix!"

"WELL, DON'T CHATTER IDLY, MY BOY," the dragon's massive voice rumbled, shaking the loosed rocks around them. "OH, WHAT AM I TO DO, HERE?"

With no warning, the tremendous dragon shifted, standing up, in effect towering even higher over the three of them. He grumbled as he dusted the bits of his former home off, snorting.

"Two for two, on home ruining," Spyro muttered, looking mortified.

"W-we may have accidentally...ah, caused this," Figment shouted up. In response, the dragon's massive feet slam-slammed around, as all that muscle and belly turned to them. Again, his mighty muzzle peered out from his far-too-large chest, his eyes set in a stern glare.

"YOU?" he bellowed, then bashfully corrected, lowering his tone. He still looked angry enough, though. "HOW IN THE WORLD—"

"We're all gigantic, right?"

The dragon glared on, but he was clearly thinking.

"...RIGHT, YES, YES."

"Well, our bag was leaking candies, and—"

"OH, YOU HAD SWEETS!" the dragon giggled, lightening up quickly, before forcing his glare back on. "Y-YOU OUGHT TO HAVE SHARED, EARLIER, THEN! REALLY!"

"Ah, those candies are what made the three of us so huge! They have uh...certain properties..."

"AND YOU AIN'T GONNA TAKE A SINGLE OTHER ONE, YOU FIEND!"

The dragon blinked, then looked to the East. Spyro, Cynder, and Figment did the same. There, looming in the midday sunlight, was a red dragon. A very, very, *very big* one. He was red and yellow, humanoid, and utterly mobbed with hulking brawn. He must have stood nine hundred feet, at least, from foot to horn, and his long tail seemed to stretch out beyond him, past the hill he had just crested.

Naturally, the math proved just as simple, here.

"You!" Figment shot, pointing at the massive dragon. He seemed more like a blown-up version of the Asian dragons in the books of lore at the laboratory. He also had serious teeth, the kind that could have made quick work of the bag. "You're the one that hitched a ride in my bag, then chewed through it! You're the candy thief!"

"GOODNESS, ANOTHER GIANT," the dragon muttered, covering his mouth.

"THIEF?" the red titan snorted, blowing out a spray of coal-colored smoke. "I AIN'T SOME RANK VILLAIN, PIPSQUEAK! YOU'RE SPEAKIN' TO THE MIGHTY, THE MAMMOTH, THE MOST-MASSIVE AND THEREFORE IMPRESSIVE **MUSHU!** NOW, Y'ALL STAND ASIDE, WHILE I TAKE CARE OF THIS MENACE, HERE!"

"PARDON?" the dragon politely peeped, cocking his head curiously.

"YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, SAY WHATEVER VILE EXCUSES AND LIES YOU WANT! I AIN'T INTERESTED IN SPARIN' SOME BIG, VILLAGE-THREATENIN' MONSTER!"

"OH!" the dragon chortled, his chest powerfully bouncing as he gave a little wave of a hand. "OH, MY, NO! I BELIEVE YOU'RE IN ERROR, MY DEAR BOY! NO, I—"

Just like that, Mushu's massive fist connected, punching the dragon square in his belly. Given what a cushioning belly it was, the mountain-shattering force of the blow only managed to make the nearly-as-large dragon lurch back a little bit. Rather than being properly eradicated, the dragon instead huffed, offended. He folded his equally-bulging arms, and gave a fairly vicious harrumph.

"OH, NOW, REALLY, SIR," he rumbled, "THAT'S WHOLLY UNCALLED FOR!"

Big and thick as he had grown, Mushu was still impressed.

"AH, ALRIGHT, OKAY," he growled, cracking his knuckles loudly, all as Spyro, Cynder and Figment watched in disbelief. "I SEE HOW IT IS. YOU WANT A FIGHT-FIGHT!"

"HMM? A FIGHT? GRACIOUS, NO, I NEVER—"

This time, Mushu's tail answered, as the colossal red dragon spun his heavy body around, and sent it cracking out, striking the dragon's face with a nasty whip-snap. The green behemoth stumbled back, booming feet scrambling to keep all of him upright as he wavered, then slammed back down into balance, fuming openly.

"HOW TERRIBLY TERRIBLE!" he blared, stomping one angry, Inn-sized foot into the shaking ground. "I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF THIS...THIS VIOLENCE! SHOO, THEN, OFF WITH YOU! GO ON!"

"YEAH, AS IF I'D LET YOU GO ON RAMPAGIN' AROUND!"

"Excuse me, Mushu," Figment yelled, or tried to, as Mushu was already bashing his way into a charge, rushing the green dragon full-on. The both of them crashed down into the mountainsides bordering the valley hills, and the mountains themselves shook on impact. "Mushu, sir? Hey!"

"I can't believe I'm saying this," Cynder said, "but we're too small to get their attention."

This, specifically, set Spyro's muzzle to a frown.

"Yeah, that's no good," Spyro grumbled, his thick tail looping about. "I don't think that red one's ready to hear us out, Fig. He's set on...I dunno, *conquering* the other one. I guess."

"This is insane, even for us! Figment, we have to stop this!"

"He's an Eastern dragon," Figment explained, and fast, as the two much larger dragons wrestled nearby. "I knew we had ended up somewhere in Asia, in the last world! I can see what happened: we landed there, he got into the bag, and followed us into this world. He escaped with a candy, after all, look at him now!"

"Wait, so he was that small, but eating one candy did this to him? He's huge!"

"The candies are bigger now, remember? He must have figured out a way to gradually eat it, which is why we didn't see him growing to our size, right away."

"So, he was with us in town, and heard the villagers," Cynder deduced, as Figment nodded.

"And he thinks..."

All of them were silenced as the green dragon sailed, briefly but frighteningly, through the air, separating them as they dove to avoid his head as he crashed down to the ground. His jaws snapped close, as he had been screaming throughout his flight, and a great mound of dirt and shattered table and

the like vanished into his gullet as he landed. He swallowed and spluttered gracelessly as he rose back up to his full size, coughing and gagging.

"OH, JUST AWFUL!" he groaned, sticking his huge tongue out, not seeing quickly enough as the bigger Mushu lunged after him. The both of them smashed down heavily, cracking the entire hill upon impact, as the huge red broke into a horizontal grapple with the green. Their hands clasped together in struggle as the green dragon unhappily tried to protest.

"SHUT IT, FIEND!" Mushu roared, drawing a fist back, and pounding down on the other dragon. Even the green dragon's tail tried to avoid and dodge Mushu's as the two long digits coiled and snaked and jerked erratically. "YOU'RE GOIN' DOWN, RIGHT NOW!"

"I-I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!"

"THAT'LL MAKE THIS EASIER, YEAH, YOU KEEP THAT UP!"

"I know!" Spyro suddenly said, taking hold of Figment's shoulder. "Gimme another candy, Fig! I'll break up the fight!"

"Won't that just sow more chaos?" Cynder asked. "What if you do what you did to Maleficent, and open up a portal, to take away some of their sizes?"

"They might be lost forever, in limbo," Figment replied, fidgeting anxiously with his hands. "I hate to say it, but I don't think that Mushu fellow is going to back down...I think we have to go the candy route, this time."

"Whoo!" Spyro cheered, reaching into the bag, and pulling out a blue-red candy. "You heard him!"

Before either party could object, Spyro popped the entire thing into his maw, and gulped happily, licking his muzzle over.

"Whoa, that's actually pretty delicious," he added, genuinely pleased, before the rumbling within him began. "Oh, boy, here we go! Hey, what did red do again—AHHH!"

Spyro's 150-foot body shook openly, his vast muscles rattling and quaking with anticipation; as Cynder and Figment backed away, the over-muscled male threw his head back and bellowed in joy as he twitched, trembled, then erupted twice as large, before them. His feet swelled wider apart as his muscles kept their proportions, flexing hard as the 300-foot tall behemoth grit his teeth and closed his eyes, bulging outward again, doubling in size a second time. Instead of the steadier, more consistent increase of before, this time, the growth seemed to come in aggressive fits and starts, as the 600-foot Spyro flexed even tighter, blowing out a thick arc of flames.

"Y...YYYYEEEEEEAAAHAHAHAHA!!!"

As Mushu put the dragon into a mean headlock, caging it in swollen scaly muscle, the both of them looked ahead as Spyro erupted again, blasting up in one fantastic, swelling burst, spurting all the way up past 700...800...900...1,000...1,100 feet, the great heave leveling out at 1,200 feet, total! His heels had gone from digging into the grass, to sinking into it, to cracking and crushing down through

the soil and bedrock alike, his sheer weight skyrocketing lower and lower into the crumbling terrain. His wings sailed out in scope, past ship's sails, past an old world theater cover, spreading so wide they could cover a city street, as his head rose higher and higher into the sky above.

"WHAT IN THE," Mushu gulped, lessening his hold on the dragon enough that the green giant could slip free and stagger back, trying to get away, but almost as awestruck as Mushu. "AW, NO WAY, NO! NAH-AH, IF HE'S GETTIN' MORE CANDIES, THEN I AIN'T FALLIN' BEHIND!"

Mushu glanced around, forcing his attention away, as Spyro trembled one last time, then bellowed in bliss, doubling in size, *again*. His godly shadow spilled over them all as he rumbled and groaned, curling his ever-growing toes into the crumbling turf. At 2,400 feet, Spyro finally stopped, and blew out a massive, giddy train of smoke, laughing the rest out as his chest bobbed, and his mighty abs tensed. He looked himself over, patting his bulk in unbridled satisfaction.

"ALRIGHT, BETTER!" he spoke, his every utterance an explosion of bass. "NOW, AS FOR YOU, MIGHTY-WHATEVER..."

He looked down beyond himself, having to ignore how amazing the view had become, in time to see Mushu scrambling away from their new friend. Still, at almost a third of Spyro's size, Mushu was easily able to close in fast on what he realized was...Figment!

"FIG, BUDDY, MOVE IT!"

Both Cynder and Figment had dug into the bag for their own candies, when the sudden shaking of the earth and Spyro's verbal boomings alerted them to Mushu. The vast red dragon's thighs bulged as he dug in, then vaulted for them, for Figment—*for the bag*.

Cynder held onto hers as she shoved Figment away, just as Mushu landed. The ground exploded out from his weight, sending Figment flying off one way, and Cynder the other. A hand as big as a mansion shot out, red claws extended, grabbing the whole bag away from Figment, and pulling it back.

"HAH!" Mushu whooped, rearing up in time to detect Spyro's far larger body approaching, behind him. Mushu wasted no time in bringing his hand and the bag up, palm open, his mouth opening wide to consume the entire thing.

"BAG, RETURN!"

Mushu didn't notice the magical flash. All he noticed was the empty palm smacking up dumbly into his muzzle. He did see the little flash as the toy-sized Figment scrambled off and away, hugging the bag tight once more.

"OH, THAT'S JUST DIRTY!" Mushu huffed, only to twist and dodge in a sudden panic as Spyro's arms reached out to grab him, narrowly missing. This put Mushu into a stumble, and all he could do was roll away as Spyro lunged for him once again.

"COME HERE, YOU LITTLE," Spyro growled, making Mushu flush darkly. The smaller red dragon turned and blew a torrent of flame, blasting Spyro square in the chest, knocking the bigger dragon abruptly back.

"AIN'T NOBODY GON' CALL ME LITTLE, HEAR?" Mushu roared, incensed. To Spyro's surprise, the red dragon leaned in and put everything into his shoulder, bashing enough of himself into Spyro that even he was sent back into a fantastically heavy roll, crashing down onto the ridge and waterfall, over the forestry, smashing the hill's slope as flat as the rocks and trees, under ton upon ton of muscle.

"Spyro!" Cynder shouted, thudding over to him, herself only as large as the towering male's head, as he lay there.

"UGH, I'M FINE, I'M FINE," he grunted, embarrassed. "HE'S GOT A MEAN TACKLE."

Seeing Mushu on the advance, Cynder ran and tucked into a roll of her own, her huge hips wide enough that they caught Mushu's feet, sending the giant red into a face-planting, tumbling crash.

"Are you okay?" Figment asked, hustling over with a series of huffing puffs toward the reluctant dragon. "Are you hurt?"

"GRACIOUS," the green giant croaked, "I STILL HAVE...SOMETHING IN MY THROAT, EXCUSE..." he swallowed hard, then sighed, grinning. "OH, BETTER, BETTER. THAT DID THE THING, I DO THINK! AH, YES, MY DEAR BOY, THANK YOU...WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU THINK THAT RED MADMAN IS ON ABOUT?"

Figment was the size of a small doll, compared to the dragon, much the same as he was with Mushu, meaning it was a bit of a task to get up on top of his mounded pectorals, which he patted comfortingly. Ninety feet, as it happened, wasn't much against over eight hundred, but he tried to offer what comfort he could.

"I think he's another traveler, like us! He seems to think you're the enemy of the village!"

"OHO, HOW TERRIBLY SILLY!" the dragon chuckled, making Figment shake cutely. "WELL, I SHALL HAVE TO SIMPLY EXPLAIN THE MATTER, THEN! THE FELLOW DOES PUT UP RATHER A GOOD ROW, BUT THIS WHOLE FUSS, OH, IT CAN BE TALKED THROUGH, WITH A BIT OF...OOH..."

To Figment's horror, the rumbling was returning, tenfold.

"Wh...what did you just swallow?" he asked, as the shuddering quake racing through the dragon's yellow chest and huge belly grew worse and worse and worse, yet.

"HMM? WHY, I DON'T THINK I SWALL—OOOOOOH!"

Instantaneously, Figment's view of the dragon changed, in that the dragon no longer existed as a part of the scenery; the dragon, in one hiccuping blast of growth, had *become* the scenery. The stretch of scales pulling wider and tighter roared over everything else as Figment hollered and hugged down tight, feeling the rising wave of growth as his new friend exploded everywhere, booming from 850 feet to 1,300 feet, then 1,700 feet, in a steady rush of inflation. His muscles ballooned to unthinkable spans, partial liftoff from the ground happening simply by dint of his backside blowing up against the entire mountainside, his upper half pushing up along it, as his lower belly and humongous legs muscles

pushed back toward the forest, toward Spyro and Cynder and Mushu, all of whom looked back in total fear. His growing head towered up higher still, pushing beyond the lower peaks of the mountain range, the rest of him rumbling bigger and wider and heavier back towards the forests.

"WHOA," Spyro gasped, scrambling back up to his feet, as Cynder raced away from the sheer wall of the dragon's growing belly and legs. His growth was so brutally rapid, so voracious, that Mushu found himself being bowled over by it, prompting Cynder to turn back and help pull his much larger body back out again. "FORGET HIM, MOVE!"

"Come on!" she hollered, helping he stunned Mushu back up; in return, without a word, Mushu scooped Cynder up in his huge arms and thundered away, running past Spyro as he stood up in full.

By the time he was up, the dragon's stretching belly collided directly with him; even at nearly half a mile tall, Spyro already found it difficult to contain the raging surge of the dragon's body, which continually boomed bigger, spreading everywhere. A paunch over three thousand feet across rumbled and bulged, pushing Spyro's musclebound body back, prompting him to dig in and shove against it, as the mile-tall reluctant dragon moaned and shuddered and burst even bigger!

"GAH," Spyro huffed, his hands slamming up against the dragon's thickening scales, pushing back for all they were worth. The moment they connected, however, he felt it. A great burst of pressurized heat tingled into him, burning wonderfully against his connecting palms, and before he knew what was happening, Spyro was growing, as well. "W...H-HEY...HEY! SO THAT'S W-WHAT RED D-DOES!"

Instead of panicking further, now Spyro was cackling like mad. He felt his building-sized fingers bulge even larger, spreading out across more and more of the dragon's growing belly, as Spyro's body twitched and blew up to a clean, lovely three thousand feet, total.

Still, even as he felt the pipeline bring in more and more power, he could quickly tell that the dragon was growing larger...even as he fed, it was still going strong!

"H-HOW MUCH BIGGER...IS THIS GUY GETTING!?" he growled, trying to will more and more into himself, as the tidal bulk swelled bigger around him, dimpling out against his swollen, growing muscles. He felt pockets of muscle rising out as the power flooded into him, wild, undisciplined, forcing his back to blow out bigger, before his widening neck and hips caught up. As Spyro surged up to 3,500 feet, then 4,000, the green dragon whimpered and moaned, blowing up past 4 miles, then 6! His back muscles boomed, ballooning mercilessly larger against the cracking mountain, as it went from a wall, to a seat, then a cushion, compared to the vast, ever-growing male.

"How?" Figment wailed, wobbling in place. "How can he be this huge!?"

Progressively more and more lost on a set of vast pectorals, Figment struggled his way to a stand, then fished out several candies. Two or three must have been in hand, he couldn't quite tell; as he raised it out of the bag, the monstrously huge dragon burst even larger, forcing Figment into a slide down into the dip in his chest. His grip failed, leaving one random candy caged with in his hand, and with no alternatives, he quickly took it up and swallowed...

Their running had brought Mushu and Cynder clear past the forests that kept the dragon and the

village apart, meaning the village's tiny walls were suddenly there, before them. They were too big, too high up now, to even hear the myriad screams and wails of the terrified humans below, and frankly, there wasn't much time to dwell on them.

"Here, put me down, quickly," Cynder ordered. Shockingly, Mushu obeyed.

"YEAH, ALRIGHT," he huffed, turning with her to see the great wall of dragon's belly crushing out bigger and bigger over the horizon, smashing over the snapping forest green like a thin blanket. "WHAT DO WE DO? HE'S STILL GROWIN' BIGGER!"

"If he keeps growing, the village actually will be in real danger! Right, we...uh..."

Cynder opened her palm, and there indeed was another candy. For all the panic going on, Mushu definitely noticed it.

"GOOD IDEA! OKAY, HAND IT OVER, AND I'LL—"

He went slack-jawed as Cynder popped the black-and-green-swirled orb into her own mouth, and swallowed.

"OR THAT."

"There's a reason why it can't be you, if I'm correct! Just...haaaah, g-give me a second..."

Mushu, understandably, alternated between gawking at the encroaching wave of bulk, and the transformation happening in Cynder: her wings flicked back, folding in, as she tensed all over, then huffed and rattled all over. It wasn't just that she was growing larger, but the way that her curvaceous features clumped out with bulge after bulge of muscle; much in the same way he had swollen up, so too did the smaller dragoness.

He was soon watching only Cynder, even as the sounds of breaking timber and crushed earth rose higher and closer. By the time his focus had decided on her, she was lurching up to half of his size, her dark deltoids blowing up so large that they nearly passed his chest, as she grunted and made growing fists, then stood beyond even his height!

"WHY COULDN'T I HAVE DONE THAT, EXACTLY?" Mushu finally worked up the nerve to ask, as Cynder's bosom blew up over his muzzle, almost bumping his whisker as it passed.

"B...BECAUSE...I NEED AN ELEMENT...OR MAGIC...TO MAKE THE REST HAPPEN..."

His confusion swelled along with the reluctant dragon's belly, which stubbornly ballooned ever-higher into the air, the peak of its bulging span nearing a vertical mile, as the 10-mile super-giant quaked and swelled larger, still, getting ever-closer. Even then, a 4-mile tall Spyro struggled on, absorbing more and more, only managing to slow the great dragon's growth. His vast muzzle appeared up in the skies above, far beyond the clouds, his mouth open in a great, gasping cry of both amazement and fear.

That was what needed to be stopped. As Mushu saw, Cynder was hardly a fraction of that, even as her muscular form heaved up, and up, well-past his size, leaving her at over two thousand feet high

when she finally stopped.

"WHEN I SAW SPYRO GROW," Cynder panted, adjusting to her bulk, "HE DIDN'T GET AS EXPLOSIVELY BIG AS YOU OR THE OTHER DRAGON...I THINK THAT'S BECAUSE OUR CANDIES DON'T GIVE AS MUCH INITIAL GROWTH...BUT WE CAN ABSORB MORE, AS A RESULT!"

"FINE, FINE," Mushu grumbled, clearly not reassured. "BUT WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO, HERE? YOU SAID AN ELEMENT? ELEMENT, TO WHAT? YOU STILL AIN'T BIG ENOUGH TO—"

"FIRE! YOU NEED TO HIT ME WITH FIRE! GIVE ME ALL YOU HAVE! NOW!"

"UH, YEAH, I DON'T—"

"Mushu!" she commanded, from beyond her looming chest. "DO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO, OR NOT?"

Her answer came as Mushu pursed his lip, then took a massive breath, and blasted Cynder with a great ocean of flame, point-blank. Like some scaly, feminine furnace, Cynder's body did indeed react, the flames contacting, then soaking into her unharmed form, more and more vanishing into it. And, indeed, she began to grow further, literally pumped larger by the living bellows that was Mushu.

One volley of flame, and Cynder's monstrous bulk expanded, filling with energy and heat, bursting up past 3,000 feet. The villagers' collective shouts and insults and fearful verbal assaults all petered out, dying away from the overwhelming sight of her rump and thighs and tail surging over the entire village, her vast heels and soles bulging bigger on either side of the wall.

Another blast from Mushu, and Cynder rumbled and snorted, shaking and stretching up bigger still, passing 4,000 feet...5,000 feet...

"MOOOORE," she boomed, half-dutiful, half-rapturous.

"YEAH, DON'T RUSH ME!"

Even nearly a thousand feet tall, Mushu felt himself being more and more overshadowed, and those flickering insecurities and jealousies reared back up. He had been the biggest, at long last, and now, this! It figured! It just figured!

He channeled all the emerging negativity into blowing harder, and harder, blowing Cynder up past seven thousand feet, beyond 1.3 miles in size; it was a size that would have boggled her mind, before having to face down something that much bigger. Now? She might as well have grown a few inches.

"MOOOOOOOORE!!!"

The onslaught of support increased, pushing Cynder up to 2 miles, then 2.5, over thirteen thousand feet, her height nearly matching the village's length; as Spyro pressed his 6-mile tall, nearly thirty-two thousand-foot body into the dragon's even-larger body, the entire world seemed to hold its

breath. The sky-high swell of creaking yellow-green scales parted the lower clouds, a looming juggernaut of bulk, against which Spyro resisted with every fiber of his being, until both he and Cynder were pushing, together. Mushu found himself stuck between them and the dragon's belly as it crept within a hundred yards of the village...then 50 yards...20 yards!

"ALMOST!" Cynder bellowed, as she had to roar to make any sound above the rampant growth surges. "HE'S ALMOST ST-STOPPING!"

Just as Mushu breathed his last possible streaks of flame, the next attempt producing only coughs of ash and soot, it stopped. The growth ceased, the air cleared, and the landscape returned to a still. The immense wall of warm scales remained, a few feet shy of the village gate, meaning Mushu was pressed hard against it, while Spyro and Cynder had reflexively stepped over to the sides, to better manage. The village remained in a quiet terror, as did the three dragons, the clouds passing and playing around the vast dragon's belly plates, in the periphery. All told, the reluctant dragon lay atop the countryside at an astonishing 15 miles in size, bigger than many villages, bigger than the city which Maleficent had taken control of before. It would have taken Spyro several minutes to fly that, at his old size.

"IS...IS THAT IT?" Spyro asked, finally opening his eyes. Even as he spoke, he continuously absorbed size, his body's growth the only real sound left as its stretching filled the air. He crept steadily larger, leaving Cynder's impressive 5-mile tall body behind as he ballooned up past 8 miles, then 9 miles after. The dragon very, very gradually shrank back, receding and diminishing into something more manageable, as Cynder opened her eyes and stepped back, watching Spyro grow and grow.

"LOOKS LIKE IT," she boomed, even speaking softly. She looked down to Mushu, who remained plastered against the half-snapped gate of the village, even after the dragon's belly had pulled back. "YOU STILL LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE."

"YEAH, UH, I'M FINE, FINE," Mushu grumbled, dusting himself off, then looking back at the tiny village door and wall. "I, UH, I HOPE Y'ALL SAW ALL THAT, DOWN THERE," he continued, watching the villagers watch them, from their side. "DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR Y'ALL, ALRIGHT?"

"I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GOING TO CHEER US ON," Cynder whispered. Mushu glumly seconded.

"WHAT MADE YOU THINK A THROW-DOWN WAS A GOOD IDEA, ANYWAY?" Spyro asked, still growing bigger and bigger, nearby. Between a dragon now standing 10 miles tall and an equally-disappointed five-mile one, Mushu shrank back, more over-matched than ever before. To old Fa Deng, he had at least constituted a handful. Now? Even nearing a thousand feet in height, Mushu didn't even clear the under-curve of Spyro's heel. He was an ant, now. To Cynder, he didn't even reach the top of her foot, so that hardly helped, either.

"LOOK," Mushu shout-talked, just to reach the cloud-height pair. "I JUST, I WAS DEMOTED BY MY FAMILY SPIRITS, I...I FELT INSULTED. I THOUGHT IF I DID SOMETHIN' REAL IMPRESSIVE, MAYBE WORD WOULD GET BACK, AND THEY'D ACCEPT ME. YOU REALLY TELLIN' ME, I PICKED A FIGHT WITH A *GOOD* DRAGON?"

As he asked, the decreasing mass of the reluctant dragon suddenly pulled back, prompting all

three dragons to look that way, on the odds he had finally gotten his bearings, and stood up.

Not quite so.

"WHEW...IS IT OVER?"

The voice that rolled over the plains and down through the clouds was of such a magnitude that the words almost didn't register as decipherable, even to Spyro and Cynder. The mystified trio all looked out at the enormous green dragon, only to find he had fainted outright from the shock of his monster-sized growth spurt. All the remaining belly and muscle on his now five-mile frame was being hoisted up, pulled over the crumbled mountain range by something even bigger...*far* bigger.

Realizing that the dragon hadn't roused, but was instead being helpfully pulled away, they chose to look higher up. All three gasped at the sight of Figment's muzzle, beyond the clouds. His belly and legs half-vanished in the haze of the atmosphere as he stood on the other side of the mountains, his feet larger than a small city; he was no longer big. Figment was *kingdom-sized*. At nearly 31 miles tall, over 160,000 feet, his heartbeat could be heard, *felt*.

Yet, for a being that monumentally vast, he was blushing like it was his very first anything.

"WHOA!" Spyro gasped, letting go of the dragon, stepping back clear over the village, flattening an entire glade and dell, at once. The brash dragon stood 11 miles high, so big and powerful and bulky that Mushu couldn't even see the ends of his hips...and Figment was nearly thrice *his* size.

"IT'S OVER!" Cynder finally thought to shout, as loud as she could. Figment was at such a stupidly huge scale that he had to tilt his vast head and wait, until the sound actually made it to him, and he allowed himself a grin.

"OH, GOOD! HE FAINTED, BUT HIS BODY KEPT GROWING, SO I WAS TRYING TO PULL HIM AWAY AS FAR AS I COULD."

"HE DID IT, ALRIGHT," Spyro sighed, finally relaxing, as Figment slid the still-massive dragon further away, helping to lay him down over the nearest of the same mountain range, as though it were a bed. With the dragon not taking up so much of the horizon, they saw Figment a little bit better, and gasped again. "HAH...HAHA! HEY, YOU TOOK THE PLUNGE! LOOK AT YOU, FIG!"

A few moments later, Figment's blank stare changed, as the sound carried. He looked himself over, a bit confused by Spyro's meaning, and saw what they had just seen.

Muscle. Vast, bulging fields of muscle, everywhere. His biceps still held their pump, from carrying the dragon back, and they were each so big that when he laid them down against the sides of his huge torso, they bulged out wide. It almost doubled his body width. Powerful thighs bulged with unfathomable strength, from simply managing that much tonnage. His shoulders were almost too big for him to see around, and his neck was a wide trunk of sleek sinew and bulk.

"OH!" he chirped, shaking the skies. ***"OH, I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE!"***

GOODNESS! I'M SO...STRONG!"

"THAT'S THE WAY TO GO, BUDDY!" Spyro laughed, nodding approvingly. Cynder was as quiet as Mushu, but unlike him, she blushed so hard that it burned.

The five-mile tall green dragon turned sleepily, crushing down on the mountains with his oceans of scaly bulk, snoring on innocently, as Spyro and Cynder crash-stepped carefully across the landscape, heading towards the horizon-sized Figment. Back at the village, the people remained frozen, still processing what had come quite genuinely up to their very doorstep.

On either side of their walls, foot-shaped craters of varying dimensions rested, having so narrowly missed them.

Figment took a full minute to take a seat, having first made sure that no little villages or kingdoms were in the way of his now-humanoid rear and tail, then from the effort of guiding so much massive weight down as gently as possible to the unwilling landscape. Even sitting, Figment was roughly 15 miles high, leaving a standing Spyro all the way up to his now quite-expanded chest. Cynder opted to sit as Mushu stood in between them, thoroughly humbled.

"I DIDN'T KNOW," Mushu sighed, shrugging his still-massive red shoulders. "I PROMISE, NOW, HONEST. I REALLY THOUGHT HE WAS SOME BAD GUY THAT NEEDED TAKING OUT. I JUST, I NEEDED MY FAMILY TO RECOGNIZE ME. I HOPE Y'ALL WILL ACCEPT, I APOLOGIZE. I MEAN, HEH, I WANTED TO BE THE BIGGEST, FOR ONCE, AND NOW HERE I AM, SMALLER THAN EVER BEFORE...IN COMPARISON, I MEAN. USED TO BE HALF A FOOT HIGH, AND THIS IS ACTUALLY WORSE, NOW."

"YOU *WERE* THE BIGGEST FOR A BIT, THERE," Spyro said, impressed. "THE FUNNY THING IS, IF YOU HADN'T STARTED OFF THIS CHAIN OF REACTIONS, YOU'D HAVE STAYED THE BIGGEST—"

"OKAY, ALRIGHT, I GET IT," Mushu barked, more defensive than angry. "JUST, I'LL LEAVE Y'ALL BE. I DUNNO HOW FAR Y'ALL EVEN TOOK ME, BUT I GOTTA GET BACK TO CHINA."

"OH, I WAS RIGHT," Figment chuckled, his voice thundering down.

"MUSHU, YOU WERE IN FIGMENT'S BAG," Cynder explained, calmly. "YOU DIDN'T SEE THE PORTAL WE WENT THROUGH. YOU...WE DIDN'T JUST WALK HERE. THIS IS A NEW REALM, A DIFFERENT REALITY. YOU LEFT YOUR WORLD WITH US, WHEN YOU STOWED AWAY."

Mushu stared up at Cynder, then broke out into laughter.

"OKAY, I SEE, YOU'RE GIVIN' ME SOME HEAT, FOR WHAT I DID..."

He looked back up, as the three dragons just stared blankly at him, then all looked away.

"HEHEHE, Y-YOU ALL..."

Mushu's smile dropped, as did his whiskers.

"OKAY, WELL, HOW DO I...GET HOME?"

"SAME WAY WE'RE TRYING, PORTAL TO PORTAL," Spyro said, flatly. "WELCOME TO THE WANDERER'S CLUB!"

"WE'RE ALL FROM DIFFERENT REALMS, MUSHU," Cynder said, stopping only a moment as her dark bicep twitched, drawing her attention. "THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME ADJUSTING."

"YOU'RE TELLIN' ME! I CAN'T JUST, I...I GOT A JOB BACK AT HOME! I BEEN GONE LONG ENOUGH, AS IT IS, YOU FEEL ME?"

"WE DO," Spyro said, somehow even more flatly.

"OKAY, WELL...WHAT NOW?"

"WHAT NOW IS, WE NEED A PORTAL," Figment replied, up above.
"THE GOOD NEWS IS...AT THIS LEVEL OF POWER INSIDE OF ME? I THINK I CAN DO IT. I THINK I CAN GET A BETTER GRIP ON CONJURING THE WORLD I ACTUALLY WANT TO."

"YOU WANNA TRY IT?" Spyro said, wagging.

"HEH, I DO! I THINK I CAN PULL IT OFF!"

"THEN, DO ME," Mushu roared, hopping heavily up with a huge raised hand. 'I MEAN, I KNOW I'VE BEEN TROUBLE, BUT I'M WILLIN' TO HELP Y'ALL TEST IT, IF YOU'RE WILLIN' TO HELP ME GET HOME!"

Figment heard, after a moment's pause, then nodded, grinning.

"YOU BET! SINCE WE WERE ALREADY THERE, LET ME IMAGINE THAT SAME LOCATION...ONE MOMENT..."

Figment's colossal eyes closed, and he concentrated. This time, the portal hardly hesitated in showing up, which made the smaller dragons all cheer in a welcome surprise. It swirled out, out, out, stretching from a few yards to several hundred, stopping at around twice Mushu's mighty size. A moment later, the indeterminate energy fluctuated, warping into the image of ancient jungles and spiraling waterfalls and high-peaked mountains, and Mushu beamed at the sight of it.

"HEY, THASSIT! HAH, ALRIGHT! I KNOW THAT TEMPLE! HEY, THANK YOU, Figment, THANK YOU ALL, I APPRECIATE YOU GUYS, Y'ALL ARE ALRIGHT!"

Mushu gave a high salute as he passed Spyro and Cynder, nodding to them both. The vast spiral hovered there before him, when he turned back and looked at the still-slumbering green dragon, stretched out over the entire mountain range.

"YEAH, UH...WOULD Y'ALL, YOU KNOW..."

"WE'LL PASS YOUR APOLOGY ON, SURE," Cynder said, nodding back.

"Y'ALL GET GOOD ENOUGH WITH THESE HERE PORTALS, YOU COME SEE ME, ALRIGHT? Y'ALL SAY THE WORD, AND I'LL MAKE EVERYTHING UP TO Y'ALL. PROMISE."

"GOOD TO MEET ANOTHER DRAGON THAT CAN FIGHT," Spyro said. There was no way he could ever know what the modest compliment meant to Mushu, at that moment. "GO SCARE EVERYONE WITH HOW BIG YOU GOT!"

Mushu, possibly the biggest mouth in his entire realm, just nodded in reply. He flexed playfully, then turned, straightened up, and stepped into the portal. It closed off after, and that was that.

"THAT'S YOUR GOODBYE?" Cynder laughed, looking up at Spyro.

"HE'S GOING TO COME OUT HALF THAT SIZE, SO I WANTED HIM TO LEAVE FEELING A HIGH ABOUT IT. AND YEAH, HE PUNCHED GOOD."

"MM-HMM. SO, THAT LEAVES US WITH SLEEPING BEAUTY, HERE," Cynder said, motioning out to the just-as-massive reluctant dragon. "WHAT DO WE DO WITH HIM?"

"OH, I GOT HIM," Spyro rumbled, beaming wide. "I'LL DRAIN HIM BACK DOWN TO SIZE, NO SWEAT."

"HAVEN'T YOU GOTTEN ENOUGH OF BEING THAT RIDICULOUSLY HUGE?"

"OBVIOUSLY, I HAVEN'T!" he soft-boomed, matter-of-fact, as he stomped over to and laid hands upon the dragon's shoulder, starting to shrink him further down, as Spyro huffed and shuddered up another mile larger, then another, and another.

"I CAN'T BELIEVE EITHER OF YOU GOT THAT MASSIVE, FIGMENT," Cynder said, sighing the words out. "YOU CLEARLY WOUND UP TAKING THE SAME CANDY THAT I TOOK...AND THAT DRAGON TOOK...AND MUSHU TOOK...WE'RE ALL BULKY AND BIG NOW, BUT YOU EXPLODED WAY BIGGER! AND SO DID HE!"

"ABOUT THAT," Figment mused, thinking, his finger pressing his muzzle as he pondered up beyond the cloud banks. **"I'M NOT TOO POOR AT QUICK MATH, AND I'M TRYING TO NAIL SOME NUMBERS DOWN. THE FIRST BLUE CANDY I ATE, I INCREASED IN SIZE ABOUT, OH...ONE-HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX TIMES, GIVE OR TAKE...THAT WAS A**

DARKER BLUE. BAG, RETURN!"

At that, a now-massive flash covered the skies, and faded off, leaving a bag big enough to be considered a land mass strapped to Figment, like always, matching his new size.

"LAST TIME THE BAG GREW WITH ME, SO DID THE CANDIES. THE ONE THAT BLEW ME UP TO 500 FEET, THAT WAS A REGULAR LITTLE NORMAL-SIZED CANDY. MUSHU EVENTUALLY CONSUMED A GROWN CANDY, BIG AS A BOULDER. HE SAID HE WAS HALF A FOOT, AT THE START, BUT WAS AT LEAST NINE-HUNDRED FEET, WHEN WE SAW HIM. FORGET THE MULTIPLIER I HAD OF 166; WITH THIS CANDY, HE BALLOONED UP ABOUT 1,800 TIMES LARGER. SO, THE BIGGER THE CANDY, THE GREATER THE POWER IT HOLDS. ADD TO THAT THE DARKNESS OF THE COLOR, ITS RICHNESS. I THINK SATURATED CANDIES HAVE THE MOST POWER."

All the while, Spyro listened, even as the slumbering dragon dwindled down to a mile, then 4,000 feet. Figment pulled another candy out of the now-immense bag, a bag so big it could have held small countries or nations inside. He fished out a candy, and though he could hold it easily, to the others, it was absolutely mammoth-sized. Spyro, at over 15 miles high, could have maybe held one in a hearty-enough hug. Cynder, it would have flattened.

"NOW, IMAGINE WHAT A CANDY AS BIG AS A HILL WOULD DO, HOW MUCH OF A MULTIPLIER IT MIGHT HAVE. WHILE NOT AN ABSOLUTE, I THINK THEY EACH HAVE A POTENTIAL RANGE OF EFFECT. AFTER ALL, MUSHU HAD THE SAME CANDY WE DID, AND EVEN AT HALF A FOOT, HE MADE IT TO 900 OR SO. WELL, OUR FRIEND HERE WAS 20 FEET, TO START, AND ATE...ER, DRANK THE SAME CANDY, MELTED DOWN, WITHOUT REALIZING IT. HE SHOULD HAVE BLOWN UP TO, OH...36,000 FEET, ROUGHLY 6 TO 7 MILES. BUT HE CONTINUED GROWING! HE MADE IT UP TO ABOUT 15! FOR ME, THOUGH, I WAS MORE LIKE MUSHU, I GREW FROM 90 FEET TO ABOUT 162,000!"

Cynder's head swam.

"UGH, ALL THESE VARIABLES AND ALTERATIONS," she groaned. "IT...IS A LOT TO TAKE IN, ESPECIALLY ALL AT ONCE..."

"I JUST KIND OF TUNED OUT, THOUGH THE NUMBERS ARE FUN," Spyro said.

"I FIND IT TERRIBLY INTRIGUING! IS IT BODY TYPES THAT AFFECT THE DIFFERENCES, OR WAS IT SOMETHING ELSE? MAYBE THE DRAGON HERE HAD SOMETHING IN HIS TEA MIXTURE THAT CHANGED ITS COMPONENTS? ENHANCED IT?"

"WITH RESPECT, Figment," Cynder finally said, "IS THIS REALLY SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE TAKING TIME TO DISCUSS? HOW IS IT RELEVANT?"

"I ONLY DWELL ON IT, BECAUSE OF THE PATTERN THAT'S EMERGING, HERE."

"WHICH ONE?"

"IT'S ONE THAT'S MORE CRITICAL THAN THE OTHERS, MORE THAN THE WORLD-HOPPING, OR THE SPENDING AND GAINING OF POWER; IT'S ESCALATION. EVERY WORLD, WE'VE BEEN PRESSED INTO SITUATIONS WHERE WE END UP BIGGER AND BIGGER. AND LOOK BY HOW MUCH, THIS TIME! CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN, AFTER A FEW MORE WORLDS, IF THIS CONTINUES AT THE CURRENT RATE? WE COULD END UP UTTERLY IMMENSE!"

"REALLY?" Spyro finally cut in, lighting up.

"WELL, WE CAN'T NOT CONTINUE FORWARD," Cynder countered, shrugging her massive shoulders.

"AGREED. WE CAN'T LOSE THE CANDIES, THEY'RE BECOMING TOO DANGEROUS TO LEAVE TO OTHERS. BUT, THEY'RE AS MUCH AS SOURCE OF DANGER TO US AS THEY ARE OF PROTECTION. IT'S A BIT OF A CONUNDRUM. IF WE WERE TO CRUSH THEM ALL TO POWDER SCATTER THEM BETWEEN WORLDS, THEN WE WOULD HAVE TO PAY THE TRAVEL TAX WITH WHATEVER SIZES WE HAVE, FROM THAT POINT. WE MIGHT POSSIBLY CONTINUE TO SHRINK DOWN TOO SMALL, AFTER ENOUGH ATTEMPTS...OR WORSE YET, GET TRAPPED..."

Even Cynder went quiet, at that thought.

"THAT'S...WHY I THINK YOU SHOULD BOTH...GO HOME."

Without any further discussion, Figment closed his huge eyes, overhead, and willed another portal open, near where Mushu's had appeared. Naturally, this one formed, and continued to expand out far beyond the previous, until it loomed into the upper atmosphere. Spyro and Cynder stopped everything and watched, as the vortex began to warp into the open fields and plains of Spyro's world—their world.

The two stared into it, then at each other.

"WHAT WILL YOU DO, THOUGH, FIG?" Spyro asked first. "I MEAN, YOU'LL JUST GO RIGHT TO YOUR WORLD, THEN? THAT'LL BE THE END OF IT ALL?"

"YUP! YOU FIRST, THOUGH."

Despite everything that had happened up until now, both dragons stayed put. *Because of everything that had happened, up until now, they stayed put.*

"ARE YOU BEING HONEST, FIGMENT?" Cynder asked, looking up intently at him. "YOU'LL REALLY GO BACK HOME, NEXT?"

Figment's eyes darted, the portal wavering nearby.

"YOU DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW THAT, DO YOU?" she continued, pressing. "BACK WHEN YOU FORMED THAT PORTAL, IN CHINA, YOU WEREN'T THINKING OF OUR WORLD, FIRST, WERE YOU? YOU WERE THINKING OF LONDON. AND IT DIDN'T WORK, DID IT? YOU COULD MANAGE OUR WORLD, BUT NOT YOURS."

A sudden flash of sadness caught Figment's face, and even 100,000 feet off the ground, he was too big to hide it.

"WELL...NO. I COULDN'T. I TRIED FIRST, SEVERAL TIMES, BUT ALL THAT MY MIND SWITCHED TO WAS YOUR WORLD. HONESTLY, EVEN IF YOU WENT BACK, YOU WOULD BOTH PROBABLY STILL END UP SEVERAL MILES TALL, AND BUILT LIKE TANKS. I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO DRAIN YOU BACK TO SIZE, AND DEPOSIT YOU HOME. WE WOULD NEED TO GO THROUGH MULTIPLE PORTALS IN A CHAIN, THEN END IT PERFECTLY ON YOURS, BUT I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I COULD MANAGE IT, LIKE THIS."

Spyro and Cynder exchanged looks with all the intensity and care of seasoned trade merchants. After a moment, she nodded, and he nodded right back.

"THEN, CLOSE IT," Spyro said, firmly. "CLOSE IT, AND SAVE IT FOR LATER."

"WE'RE NOT LEAVING YOU ALONE, OUT HERE," Cynder added. "NOT AFTER ALL THIS. YOU'RE ONE OF US."

Figment's massive eyes darted and bobbed, looking them over, taking in what they had said. Something bigger than even he had grown into formed in his throat.

"IF YOU STAY ON WITH ME, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT SORT OF PANDEMONIUM MIGHT ENSUE. JUST GOING INTO THE NEXT WORLD, WE'LL STILL BE UNBELIEVABLY BIG. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW WE'LL INTERACT WITH ANYTHING. YOU'RE BOTH SURE YOU'RE STAYING ON?"

"I WAS COOL WITH GOING HOME, WHEN ALL THE ADVENTURING WAS OVER WITH," Spyro huffed, folding his gargantuan arms, nearly unable to join them around his huge chest. "SO, MAKE FOR THE NEXT WORLD. I DRAINED OUR FRIEND HERE, HE'LL BE ALRIGHT."

Indeed, the dragon slumbered on, still well over a thousand feet tall. Compared to what he had been this morning, that was still something serious.

"WE'RE WITH YOU THROUGHOUT, FIGMENT," Cynder added, wagging slowly with a muscled tail. "WHAT GOOD WOULD IT BE GOING BACK, KNOWING WE LEFT YOU HERE?"

Figment swallowed the mass down, and nodded, blushing so hugely that they both felt the heat from it, with ease.

"HEH...WELL, OKAY! TOGETHER, THEN."

The portal shifted and wobbled...then grew, and grew, and grew, taking up more of the skies. Its higher rims pushed up and up, into the higher cloud banks, and as the villagers and kingdom and its confused neighbors all watched, the towering, landmass-sized dragons all shuffled through, with Figment slowly, deliberately working his staggering, musclebound enormity in last.

The following morning, the dragon awoke to find himself laying over a portion of an entire mountain. He chalked the matter up to a dream's fancy, before bolting up, and pinching his bulk, to find vast, dense brawn and a large, bulgy belly.

"GRACIOUS, HEAVENS, ME, IT *REALLY* HAPPENED..."

He looked around, seeing cratered footprints, scorch marks, and toppled forests all over. He shook his head, then got to work filling in craters, replanting the trees, and fixing what he could. As he did, the village watched, and as they watched, their opinion of the great beast steadily changed. The door to the village finally, cautiously opened wide, and one by one, the tiny people began to filter out

and join in, helping to remove the debris and add to what they might use to fix the town.

"OH," the dragon finally gasped, seeing the ant-sized populace pitching in to help. "OH!"

Smiling wide, he gave them all a towering nod and a salute, way up above. The tiny folks waved back, and the whole lot of them continued pleasantly on, the massive dragon starting up an echoing, rolling song (in an impossibly oversized falsetto).

7.

Figment had his guesses as to how much size was being taxed, during travel, but by this point he understood that landmarks were the only way to know the end results, for sure. Crashing into water, and only water, he found he might have to hold off on the whole *measuring* thing. He wasn't the greatest swimmer, either, and given that he was (presumably) many miles tall, he sank quickly.

Relief trumped fear as Figment's huge toes tapped the ocean floor, displacing huge clouds of dust; that relief vanished when he looked up and saw the ceiling of water up above, beyond his muzzle. He was nearly tall enough to stand in what looked like deeper reaches—*nearly*. Imagination-born or not, the dragon was likely real enough to drown, and panic came flooding in before the water could.

Figment tried to launch his bulk up higher, but his tonnage was so fantastic that each leap raised him by a relative inch, at best. The terror was up to about his belly, now, and rising fast. Many thoughts offered themselves, but few were solutions.

Think, think, think

He pinwheeled his arms about, slowly. Even with the buoyancy of so much water, it took absolute effort to move limbs that massive.

Can't swim, can't leapt, can't float...try walking! Go! Go! Find a shallow spot!

The jury was back in record time, and Figment willed one ponderous paw forward, dragging through the water with a ponderous, slow smoothness, before mutely slamming down again, scattering countless fish and whales away.

...One.

Two followed, then *three* after. Still, the going was too slow, far too slow to help.

I-imagine...I can breathe underwater! I can breathe underwater!

Despite his desperation, reality said otherwise. Was it the panic, or his lack of power?

I could open a portal—but that would take in water, too. Would it work? No! Spyro and Cynder would still be here, I'd be leaving them. Couldn't I open the same portal and get them back, after? Gah, no, no landmarks...I wouldn't know what to imagine, or where! Argh!

Either the depths were playing tricks of the light, or Figment's vision was starting to blur. The panic climbed indifferently up to his neck, all the same.

I...I can float! I can float on water, no problem at all! I imagine I could float, like a balloon!

This time, remarkably, something happened. Gradually, Figment crept higher up through the water, his toes leaving the cracked valley of the ocean floor. The topside was close, so very close, and his muzzle stretched pleadingly for it, for precious air, as he willed himself higher, faster.

I'm VERY light! Very light, indeed, for my size! I-it's true!

Figment's rational brain seemed to interfere, and there was no further change. Even though his suffering lungs begged for help, and his newfound muscles strained from reflexive tension, he still ascended too slowly. As his vision sank into a full-on blackout, he felt it: a rush of cold air grazed his muzzle as it emerged, then his chest!

His muzzle swung wide open as he gasped and coughed hard. A flash of light crackled up above, and Figment opened his eyes to a roiling storm as he caught his breath and flared his nostrils. He nearly slipped back underwater, and had to force his gigantic legs to kick for whatever support they might offer. Figment was floating on the water's surface, *barely*. But it wasn't death, so he was willing to meet things halfway.

"GUH," he wheezed, spitting out a rush of water that playfully leapt into his vacant maw. "W...WHERE...SPYRO!? CYNDER!?"

Thunder roared back with a mean snap, rain hammering down in sheets, pelting his head as he looked about. Water, water was *indeed* everywhere. No islands, no landfall, no coastlines or mountains to be seen. At his monstrous size, that was an especially poor omen. He brought his bulky arms up to paddle with, then realized he had no idea which direction to even try.

Just pick, and go. Land is somewhere.

Unless this is a world of water.

An even more terrible thought came crashing in, like a wave: could Spyro or Cynder swim!?

"SPYRO!" he bellowed, hoping the sheer size of his voice might do something. "CYNDER! WHERE ARE YOU TWO? HEY! IT'S FIGMENT! WH—"

A high wave smacked his face, making him sputter. For every cry he made, the sea roared back, an incensed demon driven mad by his refusal to die. In a blink, he had gone from too big, to too small, swallowed up despite his great size, tossed back for every push forward as unthinkable volumes battled to knock him over. Concerns for himself snapped to his comrades, then back to him. A much, much greater wave charged, from the North, and Figment swallowed such worries along with a huge gulp of air; he closed his eyes and headbutted down into it, crashing through. The next caught him harder, making him spin back into the cold water, circling up again into the hammering rain.

Get above it

Wave after wave crowded Figment, pummeling him, driving him back under.

Bigger! Get bigger! You're too short!

Despite every intention otherwise, the cold math was indisputable. Even a float could be dragged under. Wasting no further time, Figment finally felt around for his bag, his hands scouring his huge abs, not understanding what it was for a moment, before something much worse hit him:

It wasn't there. The bag wasn't there!

No. No! No! No, no no

"WHERE—"

The next wave slapped him sideways, disorienting. Thunder screamed overhead.

"B...BAG, RET—"

Having chosen then to shout, Figment took on a lung full of water from a tsunami and reeled back, until the blackness returned. This time, he figured he might as well hear what it had to say.

The forests whispered, settled, then went silent. Flecks of rainwater from the storm shook free, dappling down and trailing along a stretch of polished black scales, rivulets tickling in between. It was enough to make what appeared to be a large black rock unfurl itself, four legs and a tail stretching out. The feral dragon yawned wide, roughly the size of a horse, and covered in sleek ebony; he shook the water off, sat up like a big cat, and snuffled the air curiously, green eyes wide. Eight fin-like flaps of varying sizes bobbed up to attention, like scaly ears.

Something was off. Had the storm blown something inland?

He sussed a strangely sweet smell from the wind, padding on all fours towards its source, his wings tucked against his back. Whatever it was, it seemed close enough that flying wasn't really needed. Sure enough, as he emerged over a series of mossy rocks and crags masquerading as a hilltop, he saw exactly what had caused the smell—there was no mistaking it, once in sight. Whatever it was.

A massive, sweet-scented globe rested along the coastline, below, beneath the steely clouds and curving mountaintops beyond. The beach on which the massive thing had washed up seemed undisturbed otherwise, it being by its lonesome, which meant...*finders keepers*.

The dragon snorted, then scoured the vista over, just to double-check, before grinning. He clambered down effortlessly, curving his back as he landed on smaller rocks, lengthening out to thump down onto the wider ones. Every few leaps, his fins would sail back out wide, as if he were a child, constantly ready to be caught doing something bad. Or fun.

He thudded down onto the beach head, and the real scope of the globe revealed itself; up close, even the dragon's brash steel was momentarily tested, giving him pause. It looked smaller from up above, but as he walked closer the thing loomed impossibly high up. It could have filled a good portion of one of the human settlements, and its apex seemed to touch the sky. Were he ever taught math, he

would have known it to be over a thousand, maybe even 1,100 feet high, and wide.

The great orb seemed stuck in the sand enough to where it wasn't going to roll and crush him on approach, so he edged closer and sniffed it directly. It smelled like a dozen different fruits all at once, both fascinating and somewhat overwhelming, to the point where the dragon slit his nostrils.

He stuck his pink tongue out at length, testing, experimentally licking its vast under-curve. His tongue slipped back in to report, and the dragon's green eyes bulged. A terrific shudder tickled through his spine, his black claws digging into the sand as he huffed, then snorted. He tensed every muscle, unable to help it, then tingled and bulged a few electric inches out in size. The sand inched away as he shook and swelled up a tiny bit, and when it passed, he let out a confused (but highly satisfied) puff.

What...was that? It felt like flexing his muscles, without releasing! The warmth, the pressure, it had risen until it...blew him up? Was he...was he really a little *bigger*, suddenly? How!?

He compared footprints in a daze, then glanced back up at the massive orb and its swirls of gold over dark, dark green. He glanced over himself again then stepped around a bit—he must have been heavier, given how his new prints deepened in the sand!

His morning now booked, the beast turned every available mental gear to whatever means he needed to get as much of this into his mouth as possible, as fast as possible. He knew the area, other dragons would be scouting the beach for fish in short order, and competition over this thing was even less desirable than over food. It was the *only* thing less desirable.

Who else? Who else might know about this, first?

For sure, that one dim-witted Gronckle would be here before long, looking to bum off his catches. That dragon was the only outcast to actually want friends; with him being the only other loner around it often equaled aggravation, since his shared portions of fish and fruits hardly ever filled the big idiot up. He was always hungry, for food or attention, so he knew to work fast.

A good headbutt wasn't great enough, as the force of his impact returned and blew him back onto the beach. He snorted out a cloud of sand, glowered, then scrambled upright and came at the thing with claws out. Each slash might as well have been made in bedrock, leaving shallow scratches here and there, able only to make a small, cross-hatched patch. He sniffed his claws, tongue poking out, then began circling the massive orb in aggravation.

How? How could anyone possibly crack something this big?

He thought of climbing the cliff overlooking the beach, and dive-bombing it head on, before realizing it would probably crack his skull. Frustration mounting, the dragon circled around and around until he couldn't stand it anymore, and blasted a burst of flame at it, punishing it for not already being devoured. The flame smacked against the underside, sizzling; when the smoke cleared a glob was leaking loose, the sugary mass sloughing down the curve in a semi-liquid state. He clamped his mouth shut as the molten candy crept nearer, and nearer, before hardening again, just shy of his reach.

Still, the path was clear. Oh, yes.

His black tail whipped about as he struck a wider stance, drawing in deep. One, two, three, four

blasts shot out of his maw, peppering the same spot, and this time a good deal more melted down his way. He immediately took to flight and made just enough height to lap away at the sticky feast. A flood of flavors assaulted him, making the back and sides of his tongue tingle in shock as he gulped more and more down. There, in mid-flight, that strange sensation struck again, making him shudder so hard that his wings failed, and he tumbled down onto the beach.

There was no concern over the crash landing as the ebony dragon curled in tight on himself, panting and shaking, then rumbling deep and blowing up even bigger—much, *much* bigger. Sand spread out against his balled-up form as pockets of bulk began to push out, striations and sinews imposing themselves upon his frame, clumping and bulging into differing territories. Four feral legs separated into factions of their own as the hind pair elongated into thighs and calves, the top two angling out into a set of toned ebony arms. Shoulders ballooned into definition, connecting to emerging pectorals that pulled his shiny scales out in a swell of growth that made him giddily writhe in place.

The more he wriggled, the more his growing body embedded in the beach, thrashing waves of sand with every stretching heave of size. He held a hiss in, trying not to grunt it out as his neck pushed up, thickening, the flat width of his head capping it as his fins shuddered all over.

In seconds, the dragon had thoughtlessly driven himself down into the sand, growing larger, higher, surging from the size of a horse up to the size of an elephant, then bigger still, blowing up past 50 feet as he snorted and trembled in rapture. With a last, hefty rumbling, his twitching mass erupted violently, blasting up in a geyser-spray of sand as he ballooned uncontrollably over the beach, rocketing up past 100 feet...200 feet...300!

At roughly three hundred and thirty feet in size he unfurled, letting new-grown muscle clusters breathe as his arms thudded into the sand, shaking everything pleasantly. He sighed, then stood fully upright, wobbling as his new legs adjusted. The sheer weight of his man-like heels and scaly soles kept sinking lower into the beach, leaving his footing unsure as he tried to keep upright.

He...he had really changed. It was really real! He looked...good!

A feral grunt escaped his maw, and he brought up massive hands to cover his mouth, then touch down along his massive, bulky neck, getting used to it quickly. He felt his bulging chest twitch, eager for his focus, and thumped his huge palms on each one, getting a lovely drum-beat as they flexed tight.

Something close to a man's laugh boomed out as his massive black tail swished and bashed down on the sand. All this, from *one* mouthful!

He still had to look up to see all of the mountainous candy, but it was certainly much more manageable to him, now. He tensed his huge back muscles, feeling the new manner in which his heavy wings moved, before slamming his bulky arms on the orb and squeezing with a thrilling amount of power. Still, for all his applied pressure, it only managed to produce a few thin cracks around the small dent which his flames had struck. Unable to break the whole, he instead planted his muzzle into the crater and welled up yet again. His pectorals bulged against its curves as he dug his horse-sized toes into the sand, then blew a much greater torrent of fire into the opening, making the rim widen out as it melted into a sweet silt.

He blew until enough melted to make a good mouthful, then blew again to melt more, slowly eroding the underside of the massive candy. Gulp after thick gulp, he felt the great rumbling return a

hundredfold, and his delight grew too big to contain as he began to stretch and shake and balloon even bigger, and bigger, yet!

By the time about a fifth of the monstrous candy had been consumed, the dragon was already growing to match the size of what remained, his physique billowing out to frightening dimensions as he hugged into more and more of it. His massive fins had grown bigger than a viking ship, the longest ones pushing up past the topside of the great orb as he pumped beyond a thousand feet, then shuddered and gulped more down, gritting his teeth as he swelled wider and wider, taller and taller. His humanoid feet parted more and more, his river-sized tail slamming behind his rump as he hugged the entire candy up off the beach, flexing unthinkable biceps and surging forearms; his scaly pectorals blew up so vast and over-thick that he began to rest the uplifted candy in against them as he ate and ate.

His ear-fins swiveled, and with just one growl of warning he sent the single other dragon approaching the beach off into a scramble. The black dragon's peripheral vision had given him enough to work with—it was just a Terrible Terror, as the viking humans called them. To a human, that title might have stuck, but to him, it was just funny; Terrors were the runts of the dragon world, and the idea that one had the nerve to get that close to his precious treat was just laughable.

Twelve hundred feet of taut scaly tensed and ballooned loudly, blowing past 1,300 feet...1,400 feet...his toes alone grew larger than entire human houses, his hands big enough to hold several of their barns at once! Molten candy trickled past his muzzle as he stubbornly pushed it in deeper, finally large enough to gouge out whole bites, switching from liquid to crunchy. Either way was just fine with him.

The best meal of his life, the best *moment* of his life—was then interrupted, at last.

His vast green eyes fluttered open in confusion as the remaining third of the candy suddenly escaped, flying up into the skies without any help from him. Rather, it felt removed, pulled. *Taken*.

"OH, NO," a great, rolling explosion of sound boomed, rattling the beach, the cliff, the waters, and even the massive black dragon. "DON'T TELL ME..."

The abducted candy rose higher as two humongous hands hoisted it up. To the dragon on the beach, that was all there was until it moved away, revealing a musclebound dragoness overhead, considerably taller than even he was. She stood in the surf, her ankles submerged, towering at about two miles in size, holding the massive candy like a mere ball, underneath a monumentally massive pair of breasts. For a moment, the dragon had no idea how to take the revelation...but that sorted itself out surprisingly fast, as his gaping mouth closed into a snarl.

"GREAT," Cynder moaned, finally seeing what was behind the candy. "OF COURSE, SOMEONE FOUND IT. WHAT ARE THESE EVEN DOING, LAYING AROUND? FIGMENT!?"

She called out, but only the black dragon answered, roaring up at her, clearly flustered and upset. Cynder looked back to him, furrowing a brow slightly.

"EXCUSE ME!?"

Though this was clearly a feral dragon, the language and body position still remained universal. The insult had been hurled, and she did not at all care for it.

"THIS IS NOT FOR YOU, OKAY?" she rumbled back, nearly toppling the smaller giant, making him go wide-eyed as he stumbled in place by her ankles. "THIS BELONGS TO A FRIEND, AND I NEED TO FIND HIM, AND WHAT NOBODY NEEDS RIGHT NOW IS ANYONE CHOWING DOWN ON THESE, AND BECOMING A GIANT...WAIT, HOW'D YOU EVEN..."

As the male barked and bellowed up at her, she saw: he was all gums.

"YOU'RE...TOOTHLESS?" she muttered, her brow going from cocked to furrowed. "THEN..."

In reply, a white-hot fireball blasted forth, and she blocked it at the last moment with the candy, letting it sizzle into its surface steadily.

"HUH...PRETTY CLEVER. BUT STILL, THIS IS *NOT* YOURS!"

Toothless shook with anger, and as Cynder watched, to her mounting dismay, that shaking proved more than emotional. The ebony male's trembling built, then blew him up even larger, his bulk stretching audibly as he grunted and grew, pushing up past 1,500 feet...1,600 feet...1,800 feet. His back brawn loomed up over his head a moment as his neck exploded thicker, his chest throbbing out, out, out ahead of him, his shoulders blasting out wider.

"ARGH, STOP THAT!" Cynder ordered, though Toothless was too busy not doing what she commanded to do as she commanded. Part of her sympathized.

She staggered back, more of her huge, bulky calves vanishing into the deeper parts of the ocean, putting defensive distance between her and the now-2,100-foot tall dragon. His rear had blown up beyond the high cliff, his tail lifting up over the edge and slamming its growing weight down over the grass and stone beyond.

Where seconds ago he had gone up to her shin, he now crept towards her knees, and sinking back into the ocean had really put him up to her waist. At nearly a fourth of her colossal size, Toothless finally stopped growing, and let out a happy streak of steam as he shivered the power off. His bulk was every bit as spectacular as her own, and sure, truth be told...she noticed. She cleared her throat, banishing even the *ghost* of a chance that she might be blushing.

"THAT IS EXACTLY WHY," she boomed, sighing wearily. "FIGMENT WAS RIGHT, EVERY WORLD, WE GET INTO SOME NEW WRINKLE...HE MUST HAVE LOST THESE CANDIES WHEN WE HIT THE WATERS, BACK AT *HEY*, STOP THAT!"

Toothless proved big and powerful enough to have waded out into the surf, demanding the candy back with a series of swipes and guttural growls. Cynder hoisted the ball further up, going so far as to twist away with it, letting her hips and monstrous chest swing out. Toothless blushed, despite himself, leaning back the tiniest bit at their imposition.

"NO, NOT A CHANCE. SO...DO YOU SPEAK?"

The dragon glowered, torn between her figure and her thievery. He snorted, licked his muzzle over, then folded his massive, amazing arms, forcing his pecs to bulge even bigger over both forearms. His eight fins darted back, and he was clearly putting his mental faculties into how to get that candy back, rather than answer her—which was answer, enough.

"FINE, YOU DON'T. THIS MUST BE A MUCH MORE ANCIENT REALM."

A new thought intruded, and Cynder smiled wide.

"OKAY, TELL YOU WHAT. I'M LOOKING FOR TWO OTHER VERY, *VERY* BIG DRAGONS. HAVE YOU SEEN TWO BIG DRAGONS? BIGGER THAN ME, EVEN?"

Toothless remained glaring, like some huge, upset cat, scheming perpetually on.

"IF YOU HELP ME FIND THEM...I'LL GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU."

She mock-offered the huge treat, and that did everything. Toothless' eyes had thinned to predatory slits in challenge, but the moment she made her proposition they widened back into surprisingly cute black ovals, big and curious and friendly.

He looked his hand over, making a fist a few times, then worked at extending just one finger forward, all so he could point at the candy. He then looked to make sure he was pointing at himself correctly, before looking back up to her.

"THAT'S RIGHT, I'LL GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU, *IF* YOU HELP ME."

Cynder smiled, and this time, Toothless did the same.

"OKAY, WE'RE AGREED! GOOD, GOOD. SEE...I'M TOO BIG TO GET ONTO LAND EASILY. UNDERSTAND? I'M TOO HUGE."

Toothless looked Cynder over, raising his brows in a rather flattering way. He nodded.

"HEH...ER, I NEED YOUR HELP IN LOOKING AROUND, INLAND! AT THEIR SIZES, I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THEM FROM HERE, SO THEY MIGHT BE FAR REMOVED FROM ME. COULD YOU PLEASE HEAD INLAND AND LOOK FOR THEM? IF YOU FIND TWO MALE DRAGONS, BOTH PURPLE, BOTH HORNED, COULD YOU BRING THEM BACK HERE? DO THAT, AND I PROMISE, YOU'LL GET ALL OF THIS DELICIOUS CANDY BACK!"

Toothless thought it over, looking to the mountains and fog, then turning back and nodding with a grin. It was fairly astonishing how easily he had gone from menacing to pleasant. He stomped back up onto the beach, shaking everything as he stepped up over the mighty cliff and thudded heavily up onto the landscape beyond it. The cliff and adjoining slopes cracked, struggling, but ultimately held.

"THANK YOU, SO MUCH! I'LL BE HERE!" she replied, waving to him.

All she could really do was watch the huge black dragon trundle off into the mists, though it took time for it to fully swallow his impressive back muscles and shoulder blades. She felt her cheeks, then realized they were indeed still hot. Hopefully he hadn't been smiling on account of that, because where Spyro and Figment had more of a boyish charm, this dragon was considerably more, well...rugged, dominant, confident. Whatever it was, it was enough to force her attention away.

She tightened the reins on her thoughts, and refocused.

Her figuring should have checked out: if she stood about two miles, then Spyro should have been maybe seven, and Figment...goodness, who knows? With a portal as big as a country being opened, who knew how much size that had cost him?

Cynder looked down at the remaining gold-green candy between her hands, and sighed. After wandering around in the ocean, having landed near enough to shallow waters to not drown, and having found no looming bodies taking up the horizon, Cynder had hit a wall on how to proceed. Whether Figment was okay and had (or had recalled) the bag, it didn't really matter. Any candies that had been removed from it would have remained so, as only the bag could be called back, meaning only what was inside it would return.

"I HOPE YOU'RE BOTH OKAY," she muttered, her whisper still big enough to rattle the air.

Trees, forests, rocks, roads, hills—everything was beneath Toothless now. He gladly alternated between scouring the landscape as best he could and looking at his huge feet as he stormed along, leaving massive prints in his wake. The only things beyond him were the mountain sides, and the iron clouds above even them. They looked ready to rain again, making his wings twitch the tiniest bit when the first raindrop plunked down onto his head. He didn't feel the rain misting down until it turned into a full drizzle, prompting him to bring his huge wings up as a makeshift umbrella.

That huge female looked the same as he was, now. She must have eaten the same thing he had been working on, herself. It became a game in and of itself, trying to guess how much bigger and stronger the rest of the candy might end up making him, overpowering his boredom as he thudded over an entire forest, the grade of the land slowly rising up beyond the ocean level.

The only thing that stole his thoughts was the one thing that was capable: another mountainous candy, nearby, denting the landscape under its bulk.

All of his fins darted up high as it loomed between a valley formed by several towering rock spires, as though the mountain range had offered it a throne. While the deal was hardly off, Toothless did change his plans: the female had said nothing about him enjoying any *other* candies he came upon! He could eat this entire one, outgrow her, and then get his original candy back, and get even bigger!

His tongue was already out before Toothless closed his mouth. He checked the area over cautiously, then thudded down his side of the hill, slipping into the valley. As he neared, however, something appeared on the other side of the candy. It sailed up over the opposing side, revealing itself to be a huge, green, scaly arm and hand, which slapped down greedily over its topside, before ballooning larger, and larger. Another hand slammed down, and a gigantic head and horns crested over, making Toothless blink...then snort sourly.

The Terrible Terror. That little runt had already gotten to it before him!

Toothless considered himself a magnanimous sort, when it came to other dragons; he had only meant to scare the little one off, earlier, nothing more. Now, however, he was ready to fight. Unfortunately, so was it—and, the closer he got, the more it appeared to be growing.

Where Toothless was roughly 2,300 feet, the Terrible Terror was less-so, looking about as big

as the entire candy, at about 1,000...but that was changing, and fast. From the side he had approached, Toothless saw a full candy, blue and black-swirled...but, on better sight, more than half of it had already been eaten. He gulped at the idea, then gulped again as the Terror caught sight of him...and grinned.

The mighty black dragon stopped just shy of the candy as the Terror gave off a throaty laugh, then lidded her eyes and billowed even bigger, pulsing out in loud, groaning bursts of growth. It had to have been another female, given the tone of the rumbling laugh, and Toothless backed his way along the slope he had just descended. He growled here and there, but readied his retreat as the Terror trembled and ballooned twice her size in one mean, bloating burst, her feral form surging over the remainder of the candy, cracking and snapping it with her weight as she roared and swelled past 2,500 feet, pumping her up to nearly half a mile in size!

Her brown horns curled out as she closed her bulbous yellow eyes; her quaking claws crashed down onto the treeline bordering the valley, trenching them flat. She wasn't changing the way he or the dragoness had, wasn't any more human-like. She remained feral, her body length forcing her head up over Toothless as she kept growing, and growing, and growing, and growing. Her trembling body sent a tremor through the terrain as her shadow spilled eagerly over him, the overgrown Terror not shy about pressing the advantage. If anything, her advantage was about to press right over him.

Why? Why was she getting so much bigger than him? Why wasn't she changing? She had eaten more candy, right? It was a different color...did that matter?

Even the greater mountains of Berk struggled to contain the Terror as she winced and inflated even bigger, sponging up size ravenously, bloating up past a stunning three thousand feet, putting Toothless evermore in her shadow. Her huge hind legs crowded against her belly as they mashed into the valley walls, smashing trees and toppling rocks as they swelled incessantly larger.

If Toothless happened to have any spare size in escrow, he was requesting it, but none came. Instead, the towering Terror became worthier and worthier of its moniker as she snarled and lowered her head, thunder-bulging massively bigger once again, lurching up to a whopping 3,500 feet. As if to underscore the whole affair she forced her huge eyes open and stared Toothless down as her gigantic jaws opened, snatched the rest of the candy up, and gulped it smugly down.

That's right...she wasn't even done eating! Run. Run, stupid!

The normally humorous squawk of the average Terrible Terror was usurped by a rolling bellow of dominance, that staggered Toothless back, foot by crashing foot. The Terror shuddered even harder as it bayed, its emerald skin pulling tighter, tighter, *tighter* over an obscene explosion of mass. Where Toothless had moments ago been creeping, he now scrambled back, narrowly missing the wall of bursting scales as it hammered into the valley floor, uncontrollably burgeoning through it. The Terror's horned head heightened through the mists, rising higher along the mountainside, while her body surged lower and lower, wider and wider, filling the entire valley just as Toothless scuttled back onto the higher path. Her scaly sides plumped and swelled, pumping angrily, bursting up over the ridge of the valley, as her growth refused to stop, or even slow.

At a full mile tall, the roaring female thumped a massive hand up over the path, stymieing Toothless' escape. He grunted and thumped against it, and she purposefully let the humongous digit rest there as it continued to swell bigger and bigger still. Daunted (but not paralyzed), Toothless stepped

back on his massive heels, tensed, then charged and vaulted over the hand, slamming destructively down on the other side, his huge feet crashing into the flattened forests as he fled.

The clamor behind him seemed to fill the world as the sounds of the Terror's growing body echoed after. Toothless unfurled both wings and tried to make a liftoff, but it was nearly impossible in this state, at this size, so he darted between two hills, instead. He forced himself through, dragging enormous scaly biceps and abs along a grinding wall of vegetation, squeezing out the other end—only for the Terror to scabble up the hills themselves, as though they were large bumps. The only reason Toothless wasn't crushed there and then was that the Terror had frozen there, hands covering entire hilltops; unfortunately she was only stopping to close her eyes and rumble-BOOM even *bigger*.

Toothless tried to trumpet out an apology, but at 1.5 miles in size, she was able to catch up very, very easily. Over three-and-a-half times his size, she seemed either too big to hear it, or too big to care. Just as she cornered Toothless over the edge of the landscape, overlooking the ocean, and just as she reared her still-growing, 2-mile body up to smash him flat, a sharp, ragged tone tore through the air.

That sound. That awful sound was back!

Toothless grunted and shook his head, his fins ducking back, trying to avoid the noise as it rose up from beyond the coast. The sound he made sure to stay away from...he hadn't heard it this far out before! This should have been a safe region! It *was* a safe region!

He clawed at his own ear-fins, growling unhappily, as the titanic Terror stopped dead and shook her head in much the same fashion. She gutter-boomed and whipped her neck about, as if shaking off some unwanted intrusion, even going so far as to ignore her continuous rumbling growth. She strained and bulged higher and wider over Toothless, blowing all the way up to 2.5 miles, and Toothless leapt clear off the edge, willfully plunging to the waters below.

The Terrible Terror finally stopped shaking her head and went unnaturally still. She blinked, then lumbered off heavily off over the terrain, her footfall quaking territories so hard that even the faraway viking settlements felt the tremors. As she blankly stormed along she continued to balloon to more and more absurd sizes, the candy still working through her body; yet, she savored none of it, instead traveling listlessly to the West, where another massive candy rested, partially submerged in a lake out past the forests and plains.

Toothless panicked and thrashed in the water, before eventually realizing he was so big, so tall, that he could easily stand up and walk out of it, any time. If anything, he was lucky: the pocket of water was deep enough to allow him a little depth, rather than slam flat into the thinner elevations of the ocean floor. Still, he lingered a moment, looking up through the topside as he held his breath. There was no sign of the Terror anywhere, and he couldn't hear the sound, either. He knew what that noise meant, for dragons. It was one in a laundry list of reasons why he always stayed alone, out in the wild. Not only was solitude easier, but safer, too.

He crouched slightly less, in turn peeking up out of the ocean and found no signs of anything bad; he cautiously made his way up onto the coastline, when he managed to find a big enough, stable-enough set of rocky steps with which to make the brief climb back onto the mainland. Puny as the two females had left him feeling, Toothless took a moment to see just how much smaller everything else was compared to him. It actually helped quite a bit.

He checked the North shore: no sign of the first female, the darker, prettier one. He'd gone far enough away, by this point. Had the Terror surrendered to the noise? Could a dragon that immense have still been called successfully? Was the Red Death *that* powerful?

A series of earthshaking growls caught his fins, and he looked to the South in time to see the Terror shoving away at...another candy! She had grown even larger, impossibly, and at just over three miles in size was able to roll the colossal orb along a crumbling landscape, nudging it as she went.

Any relief Toothless felt at no longer being a target was quickly replaced by something much worse—he understood where the Terror was taking it. Specifically, he understood *who* was commanding it to be brought in for dinner.

He gumed anxiously at his lip, his ear-fins whipping back. The Red Death must have been growing hungrier these days, to roar out a call this far...and if a dragon that big ate the whole candy...it nearly broke Toothless' poor mind.

He could go back, and warn that nicer dragoness...but that would take too long! The Terror would surely push that food all the way back to the Red Death's lair, by then...

Toothless' fins perked up as he decided. The Red Death wouldn't get it...if *he* got it first! His courage secured, Toothless set to follow a good deal behind, the half-mile tall dragon still doing his best to move undetected. The rain came and went as he traveled, his wings covering him, ignoring the warnings of far-off thunder in the distance. An even nastier storm was on its way, for sure.

Why neither Toothless nor the bulky dragoness had seen her gigantic friends became clearer, the closer he drew to the Red Death's lair. Mile after mile of treacherous spires and crumbling rock faces and low clouds cleared away until Toothless rounded a mountain, and saw for himself.

Out in the far peninsula were the volcanic mountain ranges of the wastelands. Toothless had gone through considerable efforts to remove himself from the foul den, and seeing it again brought him no comfort. What helped even less, however, was the slow comprehension of masses greater than the land itself.

He gulped at the sight of two utterly monstrous, towering dragons, both of the violet persuasion, standing on either side of the volcano that made up the nest's core. One was almost taller than it, surely five, maybe even six miles tall, its body so gargantuan that it could only be seen in full, from that far back. The lower clouds crept anxiously past as both dragons stood rigidly, unblinking, dull-eyed and mute.

By association with the lovely dragoness, Toothless had been anticipating an equally imposing male, a majestic sort. This dragon, however, seemed a bit too cute, certainly too cartoonish to really be a bruiser; to be fair, he figured anything that big would have sufficed as a guard. The other dragon was smaller, perhaps about four miles tall, still bigger than the female. Both of them were swollen with muscle, much like with Toothless, and for a moment the beast felt outclassed, once again. It only took a moment for him to put it all together.

More subjects. The Red Death called them, too.

...This was bad.

He noticed another candy, resting on the upper opening of the volcano. It was a mingling marriage of blue and pink, and was a bit too big to fit through; instead, as the smoke from the volcano crept and snaked up around it and the rim, Toothless realized it was being gradually melted down, either to fit inside or to eat, outright.

*This was **very** bad.*

There was no way Toothless could take down *one* dragon that size, let alone two. As he watched, the massive Terrible Terror trundled down off the mainland, exiting the labyrinth of mountains and spires and entering a series of small islands, leading up to the edge of the peninsula. In short order, she would roll the candy down the way, and right into the volcano, into the heart of the nest. Then, it would all be over.

No time to go back. No way of flying. How could he alert his new friend, back up North?

There wasn't time to strategize. Action was needed, smart or not. He crawled back from where he came for a moment, and thought fast.

Called dragons wouldn't notice most things, unless it was important to their goals. So.

Taking the risk, Toothless looked skyward, opened his mouth, and blasted fireball after fireball, in quick succession. Against the rain clouds they stood out like gigantic firework blasts. He had aimed high enough that it should have been visible from the Northern shores. It would have to do.

Cynder had only meant to send Toothless out on a quick reconnoiter, not a day-long epic.

"ARE THEY REALLY SO FAR AWAY?" she wondered, forcing herself to continue waiting in the ocean. In all their time traveling together, she had acclimated to landing on dry, warm land; wading out in cold waters had, by this point, proven cold enough to drop even her body temperature.

*Something had to have gone wrong, she thought, idly swatting at a nearby fly. It returned in moments, and the towering dragoness grumbled and tried again to shoo it off with a wave. *It'd be suicide to search the ocean. None of us are **that** big. I'd have better luck with—ugh, come on!**

A third time, she tried to wave the bug off, before realizing a problem with the situation: what fly could ever be big enough for her to see, when she was over ten thousand feet tall?

She focused her sight as the speck circled about, then alighted on her vast muzzle bridge, flapping its minuscule wings quietly.

"AH," Cynder started, blinking immense eyelids. "WAIT, YOU'RE...A DRAGON?"

She focused, but being that enormous, there was just no way to properly tell what the thing was.

"I'M PROBABLY TOO BIG FOR YOU TO EVEN UNDERSTAND MY WORDS..."

Far below, on the stretching plains of Cynder's muzzle, the Gronckle rested, snuggling into a big spiky ball of contentment. At last, a dragon that could keep him a little company! The small-ear-finned, big-bodied boulder of a dragon sighed, his tiny wings resting on his nubby backside, his mace-like club of a tail curling around it. His stomach growled something awful, but he ignored it, and continued resting warmly.

Not feeling any bites or negative reactions from the interloper, the colossal Cynder gave up, and instead looked back to the mainland—just in time to see a bright flash of light among the clouds. One followed another, after another, until she understood that they formed a very-intentional pattern.

"WHAT ANGLE ARE THOSE FROM...AH, THE EAST!"

Rising all the way up to a stand, Cynder strolled across the ocean, hugging the land, seeing the last few bursts of fire coming from farther off down the coast. She beamed, then started thudding towards them.

Be alive, she hoped, willing reality itself, the way Figment sometimes could. *Just be alive!*

Night Furies (so-called by humans) such as himself were naturally stealthy, meaning Toothless was able to come up behind the inattentive Terror, slipping down into the waters around the islands she thudded destructively between. If he could intercept the candy and use its momentum, he could maybe run off with it at top speed, roll it away, and hide in the rim of the mountain range...

Two islands left...now, one. It was now or never.

As the titanic Terror rolled the candy onto the wasteland's borders, Toothless burst up out of the water, wings flared out, bulky arms outstretched for the candy. A second time in the same day, the ball rose into the air, lifted out of his reach by incredibly big, purple fingers. He roared in shock as he instead collided with the Terror, bashing into her head at high speed, before bouncing off her and tumbling to the ground with a spectacular thud.

The Terrible Terror lay there on the neighboring island, knocked out, as the biggest violet dragon held the orb high, turned to face the volcano, and slammed both palms together, smashing the candy into great, splintering chunks. The other giant dragon stared out into nothing, not noticing as Toothless reared his bulk up and dusted it off. The biggest of the pair was leaning down and setting piece after piece onto the terrain, as a small line of feral dragons filed out to gather them up, one by one, and bring them back inside.

The candy up top that had plugged the volcano must have been attempt number one, to break it down with heat, the same way he had with his precious candy...only it must have been taking too long, too removed from the magma flowing around the interior floor of the nest. He already knew what was down below, in its pit, waiting for all that food.

The best he could hope for was disrupting the chain, so Toothless reared back and unleashed a volley of fireballs, striking the entrance in a series of explosions that sent the drones into a scatter.

If none of them can get inside just yet with the food...maybe that can buy enough WHOA

Now, the bigger dragons were on the move, and their target was very-much him. Toothless yelped out the last blast, which shot up and impacted with an indeterminable little puff on Figment's barrel chest. The next chapter of the Toothless Saga began with a pivot on gargantuan feet and a hard dash into the surrounding mountain range. Mercifully, the taller reaches of stone rose more than high enough to obscure his tremendous size as he fled, and the larger dragons dumbly tore off after him.

Toothless wound his muscles as best he could through a mess of formations and outcroppings, banging his head on a low one, blowing the bridge it formed between mountains into dust as he passed. A hand bigger than his entire torso shot down from beyond the clouds, looming over the entire range, crashing down into a massive cloud of debris through which Toothless scrambled, going from all fours to just two. Seeing the smoke, however, he began blasting every inch of rock that he could, blowing up a volume of such smoldering confusion that Spyro and Figment gazed at the cloud he created, poking and rummaging through it.

Though smaller, Toothless was quickly reminded that he was still unbelievably large as he stumbled out of the mountains for a moment, then dove into the neighboring crop, rounding that end of the peninsula. The bigger dragons kept focused on the smoke, until the larger one turned and spotted him, having figured it out faster than Toothless might have liked.

Figment motioned to Spyro, then over to the end of that side of the range, the one he had just entered. Spyro nodded and thudded his way over to that end, while Figment quickly stormed over to the opposing one, effectively trapping him in his hiding spot.

It had been bad that there was a dragon that big, against him. It was worse that he was smart.

With only one card left to play, Toothless blasted the spot closest to Spyro, back down the inside of the range, kicking up smoke; he turned and saw Figment motioning for Spyro to get ready to catch him on exit. The bluff set up, Toothless instead clawed up over the side of the nearest mountain, facing inland, and as the diverted dragons waited for him to clear the smoke, he vaulted out between either of them, towards the volcano. If he could just get to the slowly melting candy at the top—

BLAM

A blast from Spyro connected, and it was dead-on. It sailed out through the clearing smoke, striking Toothless in the side, and blowing him off course. He slammed the turf so hard that it cratered, leaving him reeling a moment too long.

"SPYRO!"

*Who was Spyro? Who cared? **He** was the one who was hurt.*

"FIGMENT!"

Cynder's titanic form strode in from the North shores, kicking up enormous tides as she parted the deeper trenches of the ocean with her massive hips, then ankles, rising up with the elevating floor. She waved both dragons down, approaching the peninsula, before looking past the volcano and seeing Toothless laying in an impact crater, still smoking from the blast to his sides.

As she saw everything, the small dot on her muzzle that was the Gronckle sniffled the air, then woke back up, bright-eyed. He stretched, then took to flight, too small to be easily noticed as he flew into the opening at the volcano's base, entering the nest.

Cynder paused, before looking up at her comrades. Both Spyro and Figment stared at her, uncaring, unmoved at her presence. She looked back to Toothless, who was dragging his claw in the dirt, forming lines, connecting them. It was a bit rudimentary, granted, but Cynder understood: he was making pictographs, giant-sized ones, in the dirt. *Drawings*.

There was just enough time to take in the images: there was the volcano, a basic upside-down 'V', with a monster's crudely drawn head emerging, roaring out sound waves...unhappy dragons were swarming near the sounds, messy tangled lines indicating confusion and chaos. She looked up to Figment and Spyro, still watching her, devoid of emotion, showing no autonomy and every loose piece of the picture clicked sharply into place.

Cynder quickly put her hands up to her ear holes. In the next instant a horrible sound screeched forth, shaking the land, upsetting the air. Spyro and Figment shook their heads, grimaced, then turned and began lumbering from the surrounding mountains inward, advancing on her. She kept her ears covered as she backed away, until the sound died off from within the volcano. The order had been given, and as the two larger dragons neared, claws out, Cynder began her plea:

"WAIT, SPYRO, FIGMENT," she stammered, searching for the words, even though she knew from her own experiences that they wouldn't land. "I, UH...I...LONDON IS UNDERWATER! HUMANS BREATHE DIRT! PORTALS ARE ACTUALLY JUST THOUSANDS OF FIREFLIES! BECAUSE, YOU KNOW...FIREFLIES, THEY'RE ONLY GOOD FOR THAT SORT OF THING!"

Spyro and Figment kept advancing, unmoved. She stepped back into the ocean, doubling down:

"GUH, I-I...I FLY, BY P-PUSHING THE WORLD DOWN! AIR IS TOO HEAVY TO LIFT! SCIENCE IS JUST UNSUBSTANTIATED GUESSWORK, AT BEST! I'M A CHICKEN!"

Figment let off a snort, but otherwise kept encroaching, and she had no idea whether or not that was enough to infer some sort of slippage, some crack in the armor. She hoped as much.

"I...I HATE YOU BOTH—"

Suddenly, the pink-blue candy atop the volcano sank, then sank lower, drawing their attention. Within, the increasingly loud sounds of ravenous eating began to echo out, messy and frantic, and for a moment Toothless stopped trying to get up from the crater, and simply despaired.

Cynder's confusion was shattered when the entire half-softened candy slipped down from the rim, then vanished inside. There was no landing impact, no crash or thud. Instead, a great and terrible rumbling issued forth, as though the whole thing might erupt...only what blew up wasn't lava, but a leathery bulge of skin, brownish, billowing and inflating up bigger and bigger, until the rim of the vent started to crack around its growing bulk.

Cynder, being closest, squinted at the opening of the nest, seeing through spreading cracks.

"WHAT THE..."

Inside, the lone Gronckle was expanding at a terrifying clip, his huge body booming in every direction. Much like Ripto before, the nubby, mace-tailed dragon was billowing into a vast balloon. She caught sight of him licking pink paste off his oversized chin, as his head grew and grew, inside.

Cynder went cross-eyed a moment, trying to look at her own muzzle. The speck was gone.

"IS THAT THE DRAGON THAT WAS...HE WAS ON ME, THE *ENTIRE* WAY HERE?"

Spyro, Figment and Toothless all watched, stupefied, as the Gronckle's rump and tail bulged out of the cracking volcano. Cynder spotted the ant-sized dragons as they hurriedly moved chunk after chunk of crushed blue-black candy into the volcano, presumably squeezing in against the Gronckle's expanding body. It was a clear race between sides, as the happy Gronckle filled the vent, trembling and blowing up even bigger, in effect driving his broadening bulk down, down, closer to the great hole in the center of the nest.

The volcano had to have stood about two thousand feet tall, with a narrow enough vent up top that the candy had been slightly too big for it; given how close the expanding Gronckle was bulging to the nest's pit, Cynder put him at roughly a thousand feet in height. Since it was an ominous pit within a nest, and the peons were marching candy into it, she knew that there was a Queen, and where it was.

"I THINK," Cynder began, as she watched from outside, "AT THE RATE HE'S GROWING, I THINK HE'S...ABOUT TO PLUG IT UP! YES!"

Indeed, as Spyro and Figment returned to advancing on Cynder and the risen Toothless, and as the dragons inside the volcano dropped the last of the candy fragments into the pit, the 1,800-foot behemoth of a Gronckle rumbled and boomed bigger, forcing his belly to mash into the pit, effectively sealing it off. The tiny drones all scattered in fear as the Gronckle hiccuped and swelled further, filling every cracking inch of the nest, and as Figment and Spyro thudded after Toothless and Cynder the entire landscape suddenly rattled, then stopped. Even the Gronckle perked his minute ears.

The volcano cracked and swelled out, the fractures splitting and separating, like an eggshell unable to contain a growing host. Whole segments of rock broke loose, sliding off, replaced by great ballooning bursts of stretchy scales, the sundered mass blew out even further, rumbling and quaking, then finally blowing apart in a detonation of destructive release.

Tephra and smoke and rubble and soot sprayed everywhere, bouncing off Cynder's bosom and Toothless' rear and torso, rocks thumping against the unconscious Terrible Terror nearby. The nest was no more, unwillingly substituted with a vast, blimped-out, stretchy, spherical Gronckle, which wagged its ball-tail in euphoric satisfaction, having finally found a meal it could fully enjoy.

He must have been a full mile in width, already, and was only inflating bigger and bigger, rounder and fuller and happier, yet. His big eyes lidded low as he huffed, let his huge feet dangle against his expanding sides, and let himself blow up bigger...and bigger...and bigger...

"HE...HE DID IT!" Cynder laughed, as Spyro and Figment both stopped and groggily blinked their way out of a powerful stupor.

"UGH," Spyro groaned, sticking his tongue out. "MY HEAD'S KILLING ME..."

"YOU AND I, BOTH," Figment muttered, rubbing his huge temples as he towered over the peninsula. "I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS PHENOMENA FROM BOOKS, BUT...BLAIRION NEVER EXPLAINED WHY THEY WOULD WILLINGLY DRINK ANYTHING THAT LEADS TO THIS..."

"Spyro! Figment!" Cynder cheered, uncharacteristically joyful, as she pounced the two startled males in a tight hug. They looked to one another, then back to her, sidestepping their own bafflement long enough to hug her back. Spyro started:

"SO, WHAT HAPPENED?"

"WELCOME TO THE CONTROL CLUB," Cynder sighed, knowingly.

Figment's smile sank under the weight of the implications.

"WHO DID IT?" Spyro asked, point-blank.

Toothless stepped in, eyes wide, and both Spyro and Figment lurched back in surprise, shaking the mountains around them. The black dragon only came up to Spyro's lower calves; Toothless motioned up at the two of them, then at Cynder, then at himself, smiling.

"AH, YES, YOU DID FIND THEM, TOOTHLESS, THANK YOU!"

"TOOTHLESS?" Figment repeated, as though it would help.

"HOW MUCH DID WE MISS?" Spyro wondered, as Cynder retrieved the green-gold candy from her massive cleavage, handing it down to Toothless, who more than readily snatched it back.

"HEY, NOW, WAIT," Spyro fussed, only for Cynder to hold up a quieting hand.

"I KNOW, BUT HE FOUND YOU TWO. I WAS TOO BIG TO GO ONTO THE MAINLAND, SO I TOOK HIM ON AS A SCOUT. I PROMISED A REWARD, SO THAT'S WHAT HE GETS. BESIDES, SPYRO, YOU CAN JUST...YOU KNOW. USE YOUR POWERS. AFTER."

She showed her palms. Spyro beamed, at last, his boyish charm returning.

"OOH! YEAH, OKAY, LET HIM HAVE IT, THEN!"

They all turned at the sound of a hide swelling as the Gronckle rumble-billowed even larger, surging out nearer, over the wastelands, now over 6 miles tall. Even Figment stepped back, agog.

"GOOD LORD, HE'S STILL GROWING!?! ALSO, WHO IS HE?"

"HE ATE A CANDY OVER A THOUSAND FEET TALL, SO YEAH. WE HIT WATER WHEN WE LANDED, IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORM. SOME SUPERSIZED CANDIES GOT OUT OF THE BAG, AND DRIFTED INLAND. THE NEST QUEEN, DOWN THERE, ATE A BLUE-BLACK ONE...THANKFULLY, THERE WAS NO CHANCE FOR IT TO ABSORB ANY ELEMENTS, AND GROW."

Figment went pale, simply letting the Gronckle continue to grow and grow, gradually blowing out into his side as the others moved back.

"THE CANDIES...OH, NO! HEAVENS, THE B-BAG!"

He looked down. They all did. Well, Toothless and Cynder looked up. Indeed, the bag was gone, removed from his titanic person.

"IT'S OKAY, FIG, YOU CAN JUST CALL IT BACK, REMEMBER?" Spyro started, before the Gronckle trembled and hiccuped again, interrupting as he frantically doubled in size, shoving everyone back more and more. His sides swelled over the surrounding mountains as he sighed in delight, letting himself burst up past 20 miles, then 30, on and on, bigger and rounder, bloating more and more disproportionately vast over the landscape, until even to them, he was all there was to see.

Before Figment could respond, however, a solitary, violent THUD tore through the earth beneath them, pitching them all into a wobble. It echoed across the peninsula, the neighboring islands, and the ocean itself, leaving everyone stuck in an ominous, lingering silence.

"W...WHAT," Figment stammered, just as the ground shook once more, more aggressively, cracks starting to web underneath their massive feet, throughout the entirety of the terrain.

Then, at last, came the rumble, one far worse than any they had ever heard or felt before. It only deepened as the rain began to patter down, overhead, then swelled into a full-on, windswept storm, with only the Gronckle big enough to tower partially up past the clouds.. Thunder snarled and cracked through the cloud banks, even as the unconcerned Gronckle fell asleep, his bulging body puffing out of control through the skies and into the ocean.

The cracks split at a single intersection under the Gronckle, then heaved up high, scattering the group as the entire peninsula shattered. Instead of water rushing in to fill the gaps an utterly immense wall of dark gray scales emerged, plowing up through and parting the ocean.

The mountains on each snapping segment of land crumbled as the dragons all slid off into the sea as the unending girth heaved into the skies. Through the anarchy and rubble they could all see their own side of a towering mass, which divided into two humongous factions, revealing rows of mountain-dwarfing teeth between. An absolutely immense tongue lashed out as the opening increased, and a set of jaws big enough to swallow an entire island emerged, followed by three glowing eyes on either side. Suddenly, the terror and panic focused in on one terrible explanation:

It was a head.

A head so big it towered over them all, even Figment, even Spyro, even the slumbering, 40-mile tall, 60-mile wide Gronckle. The sleepy boy rolled away, set comfortably adrift on the water, as the six-eyed head continued to rise up past the clouds, ever-ascending, godly, and completely enraged. A massive clawed leg blasted up in the distance, then another, as the 100-mile tall creature pulled itself out higher and higher from where it had been so insultingly driven.

Toothless swam away faster than anyone, using the candy for ballast; even as he frantically ate more and more of it, he spiraled into total fear, knowing what he, what *they* were all up against now.

The dragon Queen. *The Red Death!*

*And she was still **growing!***

"EVERYONE, STAY TOGETHER!" Cynder cried, as they all staggered back through the deeper ocean regions, the vast Queen growing and growing between them. She threw back her powerful neck and blasted out a horrific, sky-shattering bellow, coming to a four-legged stand as she towered over the ocean, over the islands, over the clouds, looking hatefully down on them all.

"DID SHE EAT THE ENTIRE THING!?" Spyro shouted, over the rocking waves the Red Death's displacement caused. "HOW BIG WAS SHE, TO START WITH!?"

"NEVERMIND!" Cynder shouted, as the thunder boomed nearby, followed by a far off burst of lightning. "JUST START STEALING ALL THE SIZE YOU CAN, SPYRO!"

"ON IT!"

Figment's fears raced back in as the rising water took up more and more of his body; he fought to stay upright as the Red Death's body boomed bigger, blowing up loud, concussive bursts to 140 miles, then 170, sending more waves crashing out into him and spattering his face. Even though he was miles tall, himself, the cracking ocean floor buckled deeper, making him sink steadily, as the Queen's rampant growth escalated nearby.

"FIGMENT! STAY CALM!" Cynder shouted over the storm, as the rain pelted them all relentlessly. She waded nearer, even as her huge feet lost purchase of the ocean floor, forcing her to climb onto Figment's musclebound arm comfortingly. "FIGMENT, IT'S OKAY! YOU'RE STILL ABOVE THE WATER! SEE?"

"R-RIGHT," Figment whimpered, nodding, as another wave crashed into them both.

"CAN YOU RECALL THE BAG?"

"I...DON'T THINK WE SHOULD, JUST YET! IT'S TOO CHAOTIC HERE!"

As they shouted, Spyro rubbed his hands together, the 4-mile tall dragon flexing his considerably-greater bulk. He pressed both palms into the growing sides of the Red Death, from behind, and the 200-mile leviathan's power began to channel into Spyro—and Spyro nearly passed out.

"G...GHAAAAAH!"

His fantastic bulk exploded uncontrollably, his quaking body blowing up twice as big, pulling 4 miles out of the giant Queen, and into himself, then another 5, pushing him up in less than a second to over 13 miles in size. His huge feet sank into the already-cracking ocean floor as he snarled in a mix of pleasure and agony, his body unready for such ludicrous intake. For his trouble, the Queen had lost less than ten miles...and with another trembling eruption of growth that was more than compensated for as the beast boomed up, up, expanding past 240 miles in size. Spyro trembled, but pressed tighter, taking even more bursts of size into himself, his eyes closing, his muscles nearly exploding...

"USE YOUR IMAGINATION AGAIN!" Cynder bellowed as the lightning crashed again, closer still. "THINK OF SOME WAY TO HELP SPYRO OUT!"

Figment struggled to get things in motion, but a new idea slowly started to form.

To Cynder's shock, a new portal opened up, right where the Red Death's tail was, big enough to consume its mace-like tip. It vanished within, leaving nothing coming out the other side, and Cynder looked back to Figment, openly baffled.

"WHAT?"

"JUST...WATCH," Figment shouted back, his concentration straining.

Another portal opened by the Queen's back right leg, partially swallowing it, the knee vanishing inside. Within a few seconds, the Red Death's growing body boomed up to nearly 300 miles in size, nearly one-and-a-half million feet of raging, feral bulk...before it started to dwindle down, slowly. The bellowing Queen stopped its tantrum and looked, realizing it was shrinking steadily, dropping to 280 miles, then 270. Even as Spyro grew and grew, stealing another 10 miles into his bloating, 23-mile tall body, the majority of the deflation seemed to be coming from the portals.

"IT'S WORKING!?" Cynder gasped, as Figment strained and shook, trying to open up a third portal, though this one missed the Queen by a few dozen yards.

"I'M...T-TAXING HER..."

"FIGMENT...THAT'S BRILLIANT!"

She threw her arms around Figment's huge neck, making the dragon blush, and the newest portal suddenly closed back up.

"M-MY CONCENTRATION..."

"OH! SORRY, GO AHEAD! BUT SERIOUSLY, WAY TO GO, FIG!"

The third portal reopened, this time finding the Queen's front left leg; the destabilization sent her into a fitful teeter over the ocean, as she shook and dwindled to 200 miles. The multitude of dark-red, craggy spines and outcroppings covering her back seemed to bristle in anger at the realization that she was being cheated out of her newfound size, making the Red Death roar and rage. Her vast wings flapped loudly, starting to beat faster and faster, until they sent out torrents of air that shamed the storm's gale winds.

Caught off guard, Figment stumbled back through the ocean waters, as the Queen forced herself a little higher up, not quite flying, but lifting slightly. This, in turn, pulled its tail and feet up out of the portals, bit by bit.

"SHE'S GETTING FREE!" Cynder hollered, as the lightning crashed. "CAN YOU MOVE THE PORTALS? IF WE CAN KEEP HER SMALLER—"

"I'M...T-TRYING!"

The 180-mile colossus began to pull completely free, and fast. She raised her head and bellowed again, the awful sound reverberating mile after mile. In mere moments hundreds upon hundreds of gnat-sized dragons flew in from the mainland and the coast, a great buzzing cloud of them, from all directions. With the staggering size difference, and with the crashing storm, no one noticed, until thousands of tiny fireballs launched from seemingly nowhere, pelting and hammering the Red Death all over. Countless attacks sank into her enormous body, the Red Death rumbling and vibrating all over as the pelting relentlessly continued, more and more dragons showing up to add their fire.

"WAIT, ARE THOSE...OTHER DRAGONS?" Cynder balked, already knowing to cover her ears, using her legs and tail to cling to the larger Figment.

In response the portals closed, and a blank-eyed Figment opened his mouth wide, aiming at the Red Death as well.

"WHAT ARE YOU..OH, NO! FIGMENT, NO!"

Though he had never tried it before, Figment managed to blast a completely monstrous orb of fire out, impacting the massive Queen from behind. It soaked in deep, and the Red Death's shaking increased exponentially as she began to blow back up larger, and larger, and larger! Cynder watched the 30-mile tall Spyro stagger back in the ocean, then blast her with his own streak of flames, making the cruel alpha quiver and boom even bigger, her scales screaming tight over too much growth!

The Red Death's gambit paid off as she towered higher and higher through the clouds, surging well past 300 miles; her scaled haunches trembled and erupted wider, thicker, heavier, the ocean floor cracking so deeply that huge coral-covered spikes jutted up from the waters as she surged up to 350 miles...370 miles...her feet alone were as big as cities, islands with claws. Her head could have swallowed up a small country, each growing tooth a mountain, to a mountain. Each ashen scale could have housed an entire village with no trouble as she left Spyro and Figment toy-sized, below.

"SNAP OUT OF IT," Cynder moaned, keeping her ear holes covered, as the Queen continuously bellowed louder and louder orders. "AH, HOW DO IT STOP THIS!?"

She looked up at Figment, then winced.

"SORRY IN ADVANCE, FIG!"

With no alternatives, she blasted a fireball up at Figment, only missing his head by a few feet as it exploded loudly. Figment's dull expression tumbled into a growl of pain as the sound left his ear holes ringing terribly. He blinked back to his senses, bringing a hand up to his head as he groaned.

"AH, WHAT...WAS THAT YOU!?"

"GOOD, YOU'RE BACK!"

"...WHAT!? I CAN'T HEAR!"

Cynder thought, then pointed to the other dragons (including the controlled Spyro), who kept blasting the roaring Red Death bigger and bigger, pushing her size up past 400 miles. Her feet covered

swaths of the ocean, her shadow spilling over the nearest continent, as she grew beyond all reason.

"EGADS!" Figment shouted, still unable to hear. "WE HAVE TO SNAP SPYRO OUT OF—"

A fireball sailed through the skies, blowing up near Spyro's head, and the insanely vast muscle-dragon staggered back, wincing in pain, before snapping back to himself.

"OW! WHAT THE!?"

All three dragons looked out past the towering colossal Red Death; Toothless could be seen stomping back towards them, bigger. Much, much bigger. At a mighty 22 miles in height, the black dragon was pushing through the storm and waves, hauling a sleeping, even-bigger Gronckle with him, having to use both bulging arms, despite his own stupendous size. He outclassed Figment by a healthy margin, second only to the Gronckle, Spyro, and the looming Red Death. He blasted another fireball nearby, letting it explode close enough to the Red Death to partially blind three of her six eyes.

The 440-mile tall creature growled, silhouetted against the lightning a moment, its head lowering back down below the clouds. Over two million feet of displeased girth set its sights on the much smaller Toothless, who let the Queen open up her mouth in time to cram the 60-mile wide Gronckle into it, damming it up. The Gronckle slumbered on, even as the stunned Red Death shook her head ponderously, trying to dislodge the blimp, all to no avail.

The command roar now stifled, the many thousands of dragons all stopped, their collective clouds dissipating in the air as they fled the madness of the scene. Spyro shook the rest of the internal fog off, saw everything, then glared daggers at the monstrous Queen. Even though she was still over 12 times larger than him, Spyro wasted no time in storming back over, slapping both huge palms onto its hide, and pulling harder and harder to shrink it down again.

"FIG, BUDDY! MAKE WITH THE PORTALS!"

"Y-YOU GOT IT!"

A single portal was conjured forth, but it was rather small, and farther behind the Red Death. Cynder watched as it swelled larger, and larger, and larger, and larger, rapidly widening all the way out to a mile in diameter, then ten miles, then fifty. By a hundred miles, Figment was clearly beginning to grow dizzy; the portal wavered slightly, but he pushed on, forcing it out to 130 miles...160...

Within it, the uncertain blue energy swirl shifted, turning into a great, barren tundra, and as the portal kept expanding, Cynder put it together.

"YOU'VE ALMOST GOT IT! DUMP HER IN, AND WE'LL BE DONE!"

Figment growled loudly, trying harder still, but he nearly fainted as the portal stopped at around 180 miles in diameter. He tried again, and nearly passed out once more.

"THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH, FIG! WE'LL DO THE REST! JUST, HOLD IT LONGER!"

Cynder slid off of Figment's brawny shoulder, crashed back into the ocean, and waded over to the massive Red Death. As Spyro swelled up to 50 miles, bigger than he had ever dreamed of growing,

the foul Queen dwindled back down again, nearing 400 miles—still far too big to fit into the portal, but progress nonetheless.

Seeing the portal, as well as watching how Cynder shoved at the colossal Queen's legs, it was clear to Toothless what was happening—well, clear enough. He lunged into the Red Death's huge feral chest, pushing with all his might. He was bigger now, bigger than even Cynder,, and he felt every groaning muscle strain against the Queen, to little avail. Yet, the more Spyro grew, the more she shrank, and as she shuddered down to 350 miles, then 300, it slowly became easier to manage.

Toothless liked to think it was mostly him, but it also tangentially involved Spyro, who had stolen so much size that he loomed nearly all the way up past the Red Death's sides, now over 160 miles tall, an utter behemoth among giants. He shook and swelled with more power than he knew what to do with, gritting his massive teeth, his shoulders and back muscles straining and tripling in size, his biceps and triceps erupting as he started to force the Red Death's bulk into the hovering portal, draining the great Queen further down.

"ALMOST...THERE..." he boomed, his voice impossibly massive and strong.

The smaller she shrank, the more the panicking Red Death thrashed around, trying to dislodge the Gronckle-balloon from its jaws, which strained more and more painfully against the huge blimp's girth, as his size remained unchanged. At last, as she shrank down to 260 miles, she welled up a deep breath through flaring nostrils, and a horrid heat began to build around her jaws, indicating she was more than willing to blast the stupid nuisance away with fire.

Just as the other dragons all realized what was building up, before she could blast him, the Gronckle was yanked free of the Queen's jaw by Toothless. Even the Red Death was momentarily surprised, before shaking it off and inhaling deep, to bid new followers—only to have *another* dragon overtake her head, covering her remaining eyes, and coiling what little of its tail it could around the huge Queen's mouth.

Toothless looked up, and blinked. Then, he practically cheered.

The massive Terrible Terror clung tight, blinding several of the Red Death's eyes, and as the Queen brought up a massive hand for a killing blow, the nearby lightning crashed down, striking the Terror, soaking into it with boundless electric currents. The undamaged giantess rumbled and huffed, spilling bigger, covering more and more of the Red Death's head as she trembled and billowed larger, growing from 5 miles to 10, only for another bolt to strike her, blowing her roaring body up to 20 miles, then 40!

The others all watched as she grit her teeth and shook, as more and more lightning channeled down into her from the storm, making her a bigger and bigger lightning rod, attracting more and more lightning, still! She erupted bigger in messy, bloating bursts, slipping and bulging over the sides of the Red Death's muzzle, her lengthening tail coiling completely around her mouth, cutting the final command-roar short. As the Queen struggled she slipped down to 200 miles, then 190, as the Terror rumbled and swelled massively, lightning battering her 80-mile body, pumping it so big so suddenly that her huge feet slammed down into the bay, on either side of Toothless.

The both of them shoved furiously, his muscles surging, her body blowing up to an astonishing

150 miles, putting her even with the shrinking Red Death, and with a last roar from all dragons they finally forced the Queen's tail into the portal, which barely maintained itself as Figment teetered in the ocean, panting hard, shaking with exertion and exhaustion.

The Red Death growled uselessly as her tail vanished into the vortex, then her back legs. A 200-mile tall Spyro finally managed to get his huge arms around the entirety of her bulk, and he gladly rammed her into the portal, all the way, letting go only as the Terror and Toothless pulled back. They tumbled off as the raging Queen disappeared entirely, and the portal snapped closed, fading into nothing once more.

Figment shook like death, and looked worse. He took deep, ragged breaths, his hands quaking, but the supergiant dragon smiled wide the moment they all crowded in around him.

"YOU OKAY, BUDDY?" Spyro boomed, shaking everything. Figment winced, but laughed, just the same. He was roughly a twentieth of his comrade's size, now, so it was a bit much. **"THAT WAS SOME PORTAL!"**

"I KNOW WHICH ONE IT WAS FOR, TOO," Cynder said, patting Figment's leg as he nodded, and shook all over. "CAN YOU SIT? IS IT TOO DEEP HERE?"

"I'LL B-BE ALRIGHT, HEH," Figment replied.

Spyro's massive hand gently lowered to touch his shoulder, but he pulled it back when he realized what it would do. Instead, Cynder put her hand on his shoulder, then Toothless did the same, having to kneel his 22-mile tall self down to manage it. The looming Terror watched on, before growling softly at Toothless, who turned and rumbled something back. The Terror blinked, then crouched her state-sized body down low, and hugged them all in her wings. Spyro, being bigger still, dodged the gesture, and instead hugged her, only to go wide-eyed as he ballooned even *bigger*.

"S-SPYRO, LET G-GO!" Cynder yelped, as the Terror shrank down to about 100 miles.

Spyro groaned in unrestrained joy as he felt himself booming up and up, his throbbing muscles smothering everyone in the party with their growth, before he forced himself to let go.

"HAAAH, S-SORRY, RIGHT!"

The clouds themselves swirled, the storm broken up by his sheer size. Sky-filling pectorals stretched and bulged over everyone as the 250-mile tall, formerly-kid-sized dragon blushed, now standing over a million feet in size. Big as everyone had grown, only Spyro was left to see the actual curvature of the hemisphere. Countries and kingdoms were beneath his feet. And it was good.

"GOOD GRIEF, THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SO MANY PORTALS TO FIX," Cynder huffed, as Toothless nudged Figment with a huge fingertip. "OH! Figment, THIS IS TOOTHLESS, I FORGOT! HE'S THE ONE WHO—"

"W-WE MET," Figment chuckled, grabbing Toothless' huge hand, and shaking it *hello*. "THANK YOU, TOOTHLESS...I THINK YOU MAY HAVE SAVED US ALL, HEH..."

"HIM, AND THE OTHER TWO FERALS," Cynder supplemented. "I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU AND THAT BALLOON OVER THERE DIDN'T FALL UNDER CONTROL..."

Toothless perked his fins, then led them all over to a nearby segment of an island that hadn't fully broken apart. He used his claws to draw on the landmass like a huge sheet of paper, and Cynder interpreted it as best she could:

"UH...THE BALLOON DRAGON...MUST HAVE BEEN A FRIEND OF HIS...HE LEFT, BUT THE BALLOON DRAGON WAS, EH...HE WAS THROWN...EXILED! OKAY, HE WAS EXILED...WHAT ARE THESE..."

"HE'S DEAF," Figment offered, reading the drawings along with her, as he leaned into the others. "MEDICALLY SPEAKING, HE CAN'T HEAR. THE QUEEN...MUST HAVE THROWN HIM OUT TO THE WILD, SINCE HE COULDN'T BE CONTROLLED. PLUS, NOTHING WOKE HIM UP."

"OH," Cynder murmured, impressed.

"INDEED, HEH. BEATS *UNSUBSTANTIATED GUESSWORK*, DOESN'T IT?"

"YOU HEARD ME!?"

"I DID...JUST...COULDN'T REACT."

"IF THAT WAS WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH, CYNDER..." Spyro began, having heard from way up high.

"WELL...LET'S JUST SAY WE ALL UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER THAT MUCH BETTER, AND LEAVE IT AT THAT," she suggested, trying to smile.

"SECONDED," Figment replied, before he teetered, then fell unconscious, surrounded by comrades of fantastically varied sizes, warm and safe, and thanked.

"WE'D BETTER LET HIM REST," Cynder sighed, as Figment finally slept real sleep, for the first time in who-knows-how-long. "THEN WE'LL SUMMON THE BAG BACK, AND TAKE AN INVENTORY. IN THE MEANTIME, TOOTHLESS..."

The much-bigger dragon cocked his head at her, attending.

"HOW IS IT THAT YOU DIDN'T GET CONTROLLED?"

He brought up a gigantic palm and smacked himself, making the others attempt to intervene and stop him, when a trickle of water flooded out from the side of his head. He did the same to the other side, and already, Cynder was laughing.

"YOU HAD *WATER* IN THE EARS!?"

Toothless grinned; this time, a row of teeth emerged, making Cynder start slightly.

It would be a short but pleasant time in which the party rested and relaxed, as best as their massive sizes allowed, off the mainland of Berk. In time, the viking tribes would come to know the carvings along the Eastern bay to be holy land etched by the gods themselves, though the story they purportedly told became susceptible to interpretation by the elders, and their elders, over the years. The dragons would soon join the ranks of mankind, the largest even being heralded as gods themselves, considering their towering, superior sizes. Any civilization would have done similar.

But, before any of that, before any further adventures were to be had through space and time, Figment slept. He slept deep and dreamed, at long, long last, of home.

The Red Death groaned in defeat and exhaustion, slumped down low among the vast wasteland in which she found herself. Even at 100 miles in size, even so strong and massive, she saw nothing but ruins and howling winds for as far as it could see, nothing to dominate or bully. Nothing to eat. Anger gave way to self-pity as she closed all six eyes, and sighed.

As the fallen dragon Queen finally fell into an unhappy slumber, a much smaller shape crept in closer, slowly and intently.

A clawed black hand reached out, needful, grasping.

The Queen towered so much bigger than the shape that it had to strain up, finally managing to place a hand upon its scaly hide, and fervently absorb her precious size.

"Well! They discarded you here, then, much the same as myself," Maleficent growled, the black dragoness rapidly beginning to boom up bigger, and bigger. "How very, *very* interesting..."

LONDON

Blarion had either tripped on his way into the study, or let a healthy stack of tomes slam down onto a desk; regardless, it had done the job and woken Figment up. There was no start, no sharp gasps or leaps up from bed—the dragon opened his eyes and there it all was, as he had left it. The library stretched ahead, its towering shelves laden with books upon books, millions upon millions of words, billions of letters, worlds within worlds. For a moment he lay there, safe and lazy, buried into the seat of a large reading chair as footsteps thudded along wooden floors. There was no sign of the man, only the sounds of a welcomed ghost, come home.

Figment's eyelids renewed their purchase, right as a voice cut in; reality slipped in through the aperture, making him sluggishly surrender to movement.

"You're never going to sleep again, if you sleep in too long, lad."

A grin stole Figment's muzzle, the dragon's tail giving a sleepy wag of acknowledgment. Even without sight of the man, it was enough just to hear his voice.

"I miss this chair," Figment sighed, snuffling into it, trying to fool himself into thinking its old, familiar smells would come. "And you, too, of course!"

Goodness, but his voice felt *huge*. The entire library and adjoining lab shook from it. Suddenly, the chair was a bit too small, and Figment could feel his sides ballooning warmly, almost *gladly* bigger, as his body bulged and swelled beyond it. He thumped his growing paws down to the floor and stretched like a scaly cat, giving off a pleased grunt as he blew up to fill the library itself, booming and broadening, bigger, stronger, pushing furniture aside as his bulk mashed into the walls and shelves.

"I know you do, Figment," Blarion's voice answered, calm and knowing, despite the way he overfilled the entire space and kept inflating bigger. "Seems you've gone and grown up, haven't you?"

"Ah, well," Figment chuckled, suddenly blushing hot, even as his horned head pushed and swelled up bigger into the ceiling, the floor warping slightly under his unthinkable weight. "I suppose I've been abroad, seen a thing or two, yes! I never imagined I would be larger than you, though, truth be told. Is it terribly awkward?"

"Hardly! Just look at you! Imagination is made to expand, to broaden. You're only doing what's natural. You...perhaps took it a *bit* literally, yes...but, I've no complaints. You're my own, and *you're* your own, too. Don't be afraid of where that leads."

"OH," Figment boomed, as he felt the walls crack and bow out against his bursting bulk. "THAT'S A RELIEF! I THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T APPROVE...WHEN I BURST FREE, WILL THIS ALL REMAIN? I MEAN...IT'S A SILLY QUESTION, BUT...SURELY, YOU'LL REMAIN?"

A moment's unease slipped through the waves of pressurized growth, hitting his core.

"When you open one portal, Figment, I suggest you have others ready and open, as well. Chain them, as far out ahead as you can. Practice, and all that!"

"YOU THINK I SHOULD?"

Just as the walls of the entire Academy snapped and blew away, and just as Figment's unstoppable, ever-growing body burst through the floor, the ceiling, the walls, the hallways, the lobby, and the entire exterior, he woke. There was no surprise to it, no dismay or shock. This time it felt correct, or at least, amicably acceptable, that he returned. After all, it was only a dream. But, it was a *good* one.

8.

The trick had been not to open several portals simultaneously, as the dream had suggested. Rather, with some mulling and musing, he had concluded that a sequence of portals would be needed, in tandem, with each prior portal closing behind the new one, to save him much-needed energy. Sure, he had recalled the bag, after waking up in Berk, and the candies had been inside—and sure, he could have taken more to regain power...but the idea was to safely *control*, not blindly gain. And if a great deal of size would be needed to allow further taxing and travel, then so much the better to economize it.

That meant the first portal would need to be positively *gargantuan*, big enough to allow Spyro's country-sized bulk to fit in, along with himself and Cynder. The idea of a portal nearly as wide as Great Britain itself would have been horrifying to Figment, back in Spyro's world—but here, and now? He was becoming powerful enough to pull such a ludicrous stunt without so much trouble.

Doing portals the same size, in tandem? That was still clearly impossible, he knew that much. So, after opening the 300-mile wide portal and going through, regardless of where they wound up, he could safely assume that he could open up a new one right away, and that portal would be big enough to accommodate whatever new sizes they would be taxed down to. Then, repeat the process, again, and again, as much as possible. After all, it wouldn't do, traveling to a new world, half the size of their moon, it would be chaos. Conversely, getting taxed too far down would be disastrous. Figment had no idea how many portals he should try making, or how many he could manage before being wiped out, but it would be interesting to try.

The first stretch from Berk was about as difficult as a good, brief jog. After Figment crashed into the dunes of a vast, boundless desert, then adjusted, he had the next one up in seconds.

The second stretch left him winded, with a slight stitch in the side, but he persisted, only stopping to briefly enjoy the span of countless tropical islands and bright skies above. He could actually lose part of his hands in the thick jungles below, meaning they must have lost a good chunk of size already.

The third stretch was a unique experience, as a great futuristic city dominated the horizon, the dragons having landed just shy of its borders. It would have fit perfectly as some book illustration from the library, and for a moment, Figment was sorely tempted to explore its miniature bounties—only he was still at least a mile or two in size, meaning another jump was the only recourse. Ah, well.

By the fifth stretch, Figment's vision was starting to blur, making any analysis of the new world rather troublesome. All he could tell was that it was blurry, red, and stiflingly hot. *Pass.*

The sixth stretch left him teetering, and by the seventh, he put his foot down—in all applicable senses. His paws crashed down onto firmament on landing, shaking snow off of the surrounding treetops; these canopies made it all the way up to Figment's lower belly, and though he only had a minute before exhaustion set in, he estimated he must have stood roughly two hundred...no, two hundred and fifty feet! Success!

He wobbled against frigid winds, unprepared, and toppled onto whatever it was that had been behind him—namely, a 90-foot Cynder. She gasped and pushed against his bulk, but at less than half the dragon's size, it was an uphill battle.

"Figment, stop," Cynder huffed, straining to keep her comrade upright. "That's enough world-hopping, for the moment, you're no good to anyone, passed out!"

"SHE'S RIGHT, FIG," Spyro's far larger voice detonated from the skies, despite his hushed tone. "BESIDES, YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE *ALL* OF MY GAINS!"

Despite all the travel-taxing, Spyro still loomed incredibly large overhead, eclipsing the both of them. The white-capped woodlands darkened beneath his shadow, as nearly 2 miles of muscle and scales hovered, replacing the upper half of the new world with only himself.

"Right," Figment chuckled, his good humor intact. "I suppose it'll have to do, won't it?"

"Where are we, this time?" Cynder murmured, suddenly aware of a powerful, looming quiet,

bigger (and more intimidating) than all three of them.

"It's all quite still, isn't it," Figment sighed, rubbing his eyes. "At least we can move around comfortably enough, again!"

"I'M COMFORTABLE, AS IS, HEH," Spyro puffed, as he stretched and popped his musclebound back. "SO. ANYONE UP FOR WANDERING ABOUT, UNTIL TROUBLE STARTS?"

"A *few* worlds have been calm," Cynder offered, dusting some snowfall off her breasts. "Maybe we'll get lucky and have a smooth time here, until Figment feels well enough to try jumping again?"

"We could just relax here for a moment, I shouldn't need much time," Figment said. "That sleep back in Toothless' world did a lot of good."

At that, Toothless rounded from behind Spyro's massive girth, grinning. The other dragons looked to him, wide-eyed, surprised that the black dragon had come when called—*across worlds*.

"Toothless!?" Cynder balked, as the 900-foot black colossus thundered over, taking a very, very hefty seat beside both Cynder and Figment. Compared to Spyro, he wasn't much, but to the two of them, he was *huge*. "What...did he...did he follow us through?"

Toothless beamed wider, nodding rapidly. All eight head fins whipped up and down as he did so, before flicking out to attention as Figment staggered over and waved.

"I...I suppose he must have! You really followed us all this way?"

Toothless puffed up, proud yet nonchalant, as though it were hardly a big deal (but worth mentioning, all the same). His enormous muscles twitched, polished and shining, even in the low light of Winter snow. He huffed out some frosty clouds, then nosed at all three of them individually, before pawing at his own gigantic pectorals, eyes soft and trusting.

"YOU COULD HAVE STAYED LARGE AND IN CHARGE, IN YOUR OWN WORLD," Spyro rumbled, "BUT YOU DECIDED TO STICK WITH US? REALLY?"

Toothless looked up, then back down, blankly grinning, then shrugging his huge shoulders. The other dragons looked each other over, in silent council, before shrugging back.

"The more, the merrier," Cynder said, giving a crooked little grin.

"Well, glad to have you, Toothless," Figment declared, putting a welcoming hand out for the kind of shake he always saw humans do. Toothless paused, before finally looking down at Figment's hand. He sniffed at it, then nosed curiously past, snuffling the bag around Figment's belly.

"WHEN HE PUTS IT THAT WAY...YEAH, I GET IT," Spyro admitted, nodding.

"I know you think about more than just candies," Cynder replied. "Pure good-faith."

"IT CAN'T BE PURE, IF YOU HAD TO *SAY* IT..."

"Huh! Well, then, business! The four of us are either moving along, or staying put," Cynder said, redirecting things back to where they needed to be. "What should it be?"

Figment reaffirmed that the bag was closed as he cleared his throat to reply. Still, Toothless kept watch on it, eyes cat-like and huge.

"Well, we landed together, and all stayed conscious. Usually, something would happen to force our involvement, so...I say we stay put and relax. This area seems awfully expansive, it's all wilderness. So, if we don't head out into any potential conflict, we should be able to *what in the world is that*—"

Toothless was staring out to the East, and Figment reflexively followed, to see the roof of a house approaching. At least, it looked as such. A smoking chimney and two shingled slats weaved and bobbed in and out through the woods in the distance. Cynder had to squeeze past the two to see it, and Spyro was so tall that he was the last to notice by an embarrassing margin.

"WAIT...IS THAT..."

"I think so," Cynder replied, cautiously. "A moving house, that high up?"

"We've certainly seen stranger sights," Figment added. Spyro nodded knowingly.

"AND HOW."

The rooftop rose and fell, tilting, teetering, a drunken thing on unsure legs. When it cleared the trees directly ahead, that sentiment proved surprisingly accurate.

"I...might rescind that statement," Figment muttered, cocking a brow at the sight of a home elevated clear up off the ground by a pair of enormous bird's legs, set underneath its foundations.

Toothless cocked his head, looking the thing up and down.

Before anyone else could gather enough words to make hay out of, the door opened, and a great wind blasted at their backs, so powerful, so insistent, that even the four giants felt the ground withdraw from their feet. There was a rush of movement, a spin (likely vertical), and the sound of a doorway slamming shut behind them, before Figment thumped down onto a creaking floor. The bulk of Spyro, Toothless and Cynder followed, *bump-bump-bumping* against him.

"Right. At least this house didn't get bigger," Spyro coughed, from behind, his voice suddenly small and manageable once again. Candlelight sparked in a corner, and as the party stood up they were indeed appointed to a small, rustic cottage interior. It was a little rough, to be honest.

"It is a bit more...*old-world* than the last one, isn't it?" Figment mused, as a large cauldron did its bubbling over an even larger stone hearth. Unlike the fairies and reluctant dragon's cauldrons, this one really meant business.

"It looks like we've been scaled down to proper guest-size, here," Cynder surmised.

"You're still pretty big, where it counts," Spyro laughed, nudging Cynder's bulky shoulder with his own. "We've all kept the muscle, at least, so hey. Plus, Fig probably already knows: we'll likely get

back our size when we leave, just like with the other place—"

"There *are* no other places like this one!"

The voice filled the cabin, sharp and shrill, yet crackling like yellowed wax paper. All four of them froze, including the increasingly bewildered Toothless. The black dragon turned cautiously, his fins raised, only to bark in shock as he bumped into an elderly woman, some humble variety of crone, who shoved right by the lot as she made for the cauldron.

"I didn't even hear a door," Spyro grunted, trying to play off the startling.

"We're awfully sorry to intrude, Miss," Figment started, when—

"You, intrude?" she snapped, busily tossing ingredients into the pot. "I bid you entry, you silly creature! Hoho, you intrude only by permission! Now, you all get warm, and do so quietly. I will see to you all after my current visitor departs. Busy day, today."

"Current?" Cynder whispered, only for the old crone to snap two aged fingers, silencing her.

"Ah, geez, sorry," a small voice replied, as a tiny white bat appeared over the woman's shoulder, smiling apologetically. "Yeah, dat's me, there, she's talkin' about. Got here first, I guess. So, what're you fellas seein' the great Baba Yaga for?"

Cynder made to answer, but nothing came out of her mouth. She covered her muzzle and made a face at Figment, who met the same muted outcome, when he tried to speak.

"Feh, *quietly* means *quietly*, lizards," Baba Yaga snarked, not so much offended, as momentarily annoyed. "This tiny creature has pressing business! He has come on a quest, a noble one! Bartok the Magnificent, here, he is to save Prince Ivan from a terrible fate, one that affects the entire country."

"Heh, aw, go on, then," Bartok chuckled, anxiously. "I-I'm not such a big bother—"

"No, no," Baba Yaga corrected. "You are the Magnificent one! I have heard the recent tales of your amazing works in the villages and cities! You were appointed to save the Prince! *Duly* appointed! What can I do, but help, in the face of such humbling power?"

Figment wrinkled his muzzle. He had been in the Academy halls long enough to detect a master's sarcasm at its peak.

Despite being shrunken down, with all four dragons clumped together in a herd of muscles, they still took up a chunk of the sitting space near the doorway, where they waited politely. Out of the corner of his eye Figment could see Spyro stifling a laugh. He turned as much as his thick girth allowed and raised his brows; Spyro, still grinning, nodded over to Toothless. He was already asleep where he sat, casually napping, utterly indifferent.

Cynder nudged them both back to attention. She may have been smiling, too.

"Alright," Baba Yaga cackled, proud of her handiwork. "This mixture will bring out whatever is

inside of your heart, Bartok, ten-fold! We need only to let it cool a few moments. Then, you will fill this vial and drink it, when the time presents itself. Understand?"

"Oh, yeah, sure, you bet," the little bat concurred, nodding up a storm. "Ten times, that uh...that oughta be plenty, and a half, yup. Real nice of you, there!"

A palpable panic caked Bartok's every word. Some older, yet younger part of Figment understood. He hugged the bag of candies tighter, and tighter still, without really meaning to.

"Now, as to you four," the witch began, turning away from them, rather than towards, and marching back into another room. "Wait here a moment longer, and do not crush those candies in your bag. You're in possession of a rather terrifying power, after all. Dangerous, but desperately necessary!"

How did she know that, Cynder mouthed.

Couldn't say, Figment mouthed back. He thought about it, then chuckled silently.

Oh, haha

"Candies, eh?" Bartok's voice interrupted, to the extent to which that silence could *be* interrupted. "Didn't know they made power-candy, dat's...dat's pretty neat, yeah."

"You'll do fine, with your quest," Cynder soothed, her voice having returned. "From the looks of it, you've got a powerful friend on your side. You'll rescue your Prince, for sure."

"Hah, yeah, yeah, fer sure I will, you betcha. Yup."

"So, what scheme got you in this much hot water?" Spyro asked, sincerely.

"Scheme?" Bartok repeated, acting out what he thought constituted moral outrage. "No schemes here, no sir! Like Baba Yaga said, there, I'm Bartok the Magnificent! The powers and such...I got 'em."

Figment just watched as the tiny creature fought back against a wave of fear. This wasn't some mighty sort, grown complacent with assured victories. This...heck, this was *him*. He knew that feeling.

"You'll do great, for sure," Figment offered, nodding. Bartok looked him over.

"Well, we aren't all beefed-up warrior-types, like yourself. Some of us gotta get by on smarts!"

That thought was still foreign to Figment, but from outside, it made sense. He *had* blown up into something rather imposing, hadn't he? He didn't feel mighty. Well, he did...physically-speaking...

"Show us your powers, then, pal," Spyro 'suggested'. "Get in some practice, on those incredible abilities of yours!"

"Well, I *suppose* I could," Bartok said, laboriously, shifting his approach. "Just eh, keep yer eyes on me, here, okay?"

"Sure," Spyro replied, liking where this was going even more.

There was a small blast of red smoke, which blew out and obscured the bat. When it cleared, to no one's surprise, Bartok was still there, looking slightly winded.

"Whoa," Spyro laughed, mock-impressed. "All your fibs blow up on you, just then?"

"Don't discourage him," Cynder sighed.

"He's full of...smoke," Spyro balked. "He's a little liar, it's all over him! Even the old lady clearly knows he's a faker, so why enable him?"

"Easy," Figment started.

"I'm not gonna flip tables or anything, Fig, just—look at him, he's gonna get creamed! Lying back to him isn't going to save his life, when it matters."

"It's not lying, it's just...supporting," he added, last second.

"He's gonna get creamed."

"Am not," Bartok shot back, still waving the smoke away.

"You're gonna get creamed! I'm the one warning you! Besides, you didn't do squat, anyhow!"

Figment noticed the latch to the top flap of the bag had been undone. *When had that happened?*

"Hey, no, wait," Figment began, when the old crone glided back into the living room; she strolled past Bartok and looked the four of them over. She cut Toothless a little look, then tapped a foot on the floor. Toothless bolted upright, at full attention, nostrils flared.

"So!" Baba Yaga rasped, rocking on her heels. "You...have come from very, very far away!"

"Ah," Figment fumbled, turning his attention to her. "Well, yes, we have..."

As they spoke Bartok stole his way up to the rim of the cauldron and tossed four swiped candies into the mixture, letting them melt down. At last, he started to look as confident as he had been acting.

"Do you know why you were allowed to enter here, dragons?" she asked, leaning in, as they all leaned back. "Do you know why my dear house opened its doors to you, and let you in?"

The dragons looked to one another, confounded. She pointed from Figment to Cynder, then to Spyro, then to Toothless. From Figment to Cynder to Spyro, the replies followed:

"Well, no, but perhaps"

"No, ma'am"

"Door was open"

"...And you?" Baba Yaga asked Toothless, who opted to let the tip of his tongue poke out cutely, in reply. "What, can you not speak?"

Toothless just snorted, then blithely groomed his bulky forearm.

"I see..."

Baba Yaga shoved one old hand into a sleeve, then pulled out a little green seed, showing it to Toothless as the other three dragons watched.

"Silence belies wisdom, but communication is crucial, especially among allies. Eat this seedling, and you shall find your voice. Use it with wisdom equal to the one in your silence."

She slapped the seed into Toothless' large black palm, the bulky dragon calmly letting her.

"To answer *my* question," the witch continued, clearing her throat, "this house is attuned to old, old magics, intellects, to minds fantastic and unknowable, otherwise. You are here by design, even if it is only partially-revealed. Something older and much larger than yourselves commands the chain of events unfolding. Very interesting, indeed."

"Predestination?" Figment ventured, suddenly rapt. "Or, perhaps, some long-term causality sequence! Oh, I have read much about these things!"

Surprisingly, Baba Yaga permitted a sly little grin.

"Perhaps, *fate*, if you prefer brevity," she answered. "A very, very powerful energy flows through you all, surrounds you, moves you, like a spirit-hand in the air. Yes. Even a single dragon appearing in these lands should be taken as quite an omen...but now we have not one dragon, but four, and all together. Four very...*healthy* dragons."

Spyro and Toothless gave each other bumps with their tails, celebrating. Cynder subtly managed to cover her humongous bosom with muscled arms, blushing. Figment was still goggle-eyed, a theoretical furnace blazing with scientific possibilities.

"Have you been to other worlds, then?" Figment asked.

"I have."

"Perhaps you might know how to...navigate?"

"Not easily. Different energies permit such movements. This energy, this aura...is comparably immense. I cannot hope to corral it to my own whims. I believe that the house recognized you...because it was *under command to*."

Something about the way she said it made Figment's skin crawl back. Even Spyro shuddered.

"That...is a rather specific wording," Figment gulped.

"It is. And heed it, you ought. You, who damage, then repair. You, who is hurt, only to temper

yourself and grow stronger. Conflict and resolution, repetition and change. You, powerless, yet god-like. A navigator with no map. Ruler, and guest. You are where you are, entirely by design. It is providence that we meet, yes. Providence, of a chance."

"My head's spinning," Spyro huffed. "So, you can't help us?"

Another snap of fingers, and Spyro's voice vanished again. He opened his muzzle anyways, thought better of it, and slowly, grudgingly closed it.

"I can help. Assist with something of terrible importance to this world, and that help shall be yours. I cannot control the flow of the worlds you were meant to travel, but I can show you a point at which you might, with enough force, *divert* from the path. If you prove strong enough, I can show you how to free yourself of its will."

"Yes, of course, Miss Yaga," Figment agreed, balling his hands into enthusiastic fists. "What would we need to assist you with? Moving your house? Clearing the forest?"

"You will assist me, by assisting...him."

Bartok jumped, nearly falling into the mixture in the cauldron as Baba Yaga pointed to him. Spyro bit his lip, then nodded, as loudly as he could, as if to say, *I called it*. He had, at that.

"Me?" Bartok asked, stepping back along the rim of the pot. "Gosh, I mean...you know, if you wanna, hey. Far be it fer me to second-guess Baba Yaga. I guess a little help wouldn't slow me down!"

Spyro's eyes narrowed as he snorted a disapproving little burst of soot.

"Ah...certainly," Figment agreed, though Cynder shot him a completely different category of 'a look'. "I take it, you mean..."

"The Prince. Yes. He is held in a tower, at the far end of the capitol, the heart of the land. Return the boy to his seat on the throne, right the course of this world, and I will help you."

"Figment," Cynder started. It had been long enough of a journey now, that hearing his full name that way felt a bit like a scolding. Still, he nodded assent.

"Consider it done, then."

"Very good," Baba Yaga said, smirking. "With your stride, it should be a very short journey, very simple. Consider it a vacation, in comparison to your previous adventures, yes?"

By this point, Spyro and Cynder bore the same expressions. Toothless poked at the green seed with a curious tongue, more interested in its taste than its potential.

"Take this, then, Bartok," Baba ordered, filling a small glass vial with the mixture, then handing it carefully to the tiny bat. "And good travels to you all. I will find you, when the time is correct. Until then, odd travelers!"

The door flew open behind them; there was another rush of air, an booming explosion of

returned size, then the inevitable crash as the four colossal dragons collided with the outside world. Bartok's little body effortlessly flapped its way down, after, perching on Figment's massive muzzle.

"Whoo, boy, you four are *way* bigger out here," he observed, as Figment's house-sized muzzle lifted up off a cluster of smashed trees. "Well, shoot, this'll be a snap, in dat case! Hey, dat's great!"

By the time Figment was standing upright, Cynder and Spyro were waiting for him, arms folded. Toothless stretched his 900-foot body until some joints popped, before sneezing.

"Fig, really," Cynder groaned. "You could have asked. We're a group. I thought we were sitting this out, and leaving, simple and clean."

"Well, fair," Figment started, "that is certainly true...but, Cynder, it's a way out! Out of everything, not just one world! And it explains so much! You heard Baba Yaga, it explains why I couldn't jump back home, even when I concentrated on it. I can jump back to any place I've been to, that I can remember...but not there! Something doesn't want me going home!"

"WE HEARD, FIG," Spyro boomed, his voice once again grown to mammoth size, as he loomed over them all. "THAT SOMETHING CONTROLS OUR WAY AROUND, IT'S KIND OF CREEPY. DOESN'T THAT BOTHER YOU? YOU SEEM EXCITED—"

"Only at the idea of being free," he countered. "I mean, really, now...what alternative is there? Going through a hundred worlds? A thousand? Millions, even?"

"It's not that we disagree with getting this all under control," Cynder sighed. "Just...think about it, a moment longer. She felt the four of *us* were needed to help Bartok succeed. We're overpowered, individually, let alone as a unit. What could be *that* terrible a threat, up ahead?"

Figment did think on it. His resolve flinched, but only slightly.

"Maybe she wanted to be one hundred percent sure of success, instead of ninety?"

"Gee, thanks," Bartok said, still there on Figment's huge snout.

"Ninety is a very good number!"

"EH, LET'S JUST GET THIS OVER WITH," Spyro rumbled, scratching his big pectorals.

"Please, don't be mad, you two," Figment pleaded, his tail coiling up nervously. "I didn't mean to leave you out of the decision. Or you, Toothless."

"We're not going to split up or anything stupid, Figment," Cynder soothed (sort of). "We're sticking together. Just...keep us in the loop, alright? We're partners."

"YEAH, WE'LL JUST STAY AWKWARDLY MAD AT EACH OTHER, LIKE REAL FRIENDS SHOULD."

"No offense, fellas," Bartok shouted, having to do so to be heard at all. "But can we get goin' then? What, does it take you half a day just to agree to move? All dis talking!"

"We're going, yes, we're going," Figment sighed, suddenly cowed. "If we didn't talk through things, you'd probably have no idea what's--"

"It's not dat hard to figure," Bartok retorted as the five of them thudded off through yet another forest, shaking the landscape as they passed along. Most of it was Spyro.

"So, dat's gotta be the tower, there, at the far end of the city. I've seen it before."

The old capitol was large, even to them. Figment confirmed the general time period of this world, at least, as he spied numerous Byzantine spires and onion-shaped domes, as far as he could see.

"This is quite near to my own time, back in London," Figment chirped, impressed. "Look, that late-period Muscovite architecture, that style! This is Russia! Well, she *was* named Baba Yaga, after the famous folklore witch...I suppose that hadn't sunk in before, heh, silly me..."

"DO WHAT, NOW?" Spyro asked, confused.

"The city," Figment explained. "The style. It's Baroque."

"LOOKS FINE TO ME."

"Yeah, anyhow," Bartok shouted, his voice getting hoarse. "The Regent of the Prince, Mistress Ludmilla, she's the one who tasked me with saving Ivan...so, yeah, you just lemme do the talkin', when we arrive at the gates. Better still, you oughta stay back here a bit, unless you wanna scare everyone. I'll tell her dat someone in the royal family's secretly keeping Ivan prisoner, an' she'll know what to do."

"That's it? Baba Yaga gave you all that pep-talk and that fancy potion, and all you need to do is oust the traitor and get the Prince out?" Cynder wondered aloud. "That...doesn't seem so difficult."

"Well, the Royal family, yanno, s'got a lot of armed guards and an army, so...I think she wanted you around as backup, in case things went South fer me."

"Like I said," she snorted, flicking her huge wings.

"It's plan A, okay? Lemme just try it first."

No one protested further, so off Bartok flapped, carrying the small vial with him, held by a sliver of thread, much like the strap on Figment's bag.

"I suppose we wait, then," Figment sighed, shrugging his huge shoulders. He turned to the other two, then saw Toothless tonguing at the same green seed, playing with it, pushing it around on his open palm. "Say, Toothless, don't you want to talk? Why not swallow it?"

Toothless' tongue slipped back in as he looked to Figment, then back to the seed.

"YEAH, WOULDN'T MIND ANOTHER DRAGON TO TALK BIG WITH," Spyro added.

"I think it's nice, the strong silent type," Cynder countered. "Very dignified."

"DIGNITY ISN'T EVERYTHING," Spyro rumbled. "BESIDES, THAT'S HOW A FEMALE SEES IT. YOU'RE TOO FLATTERING TO US MALES, HEH!"

"Is *that* what I was being?" she hummed, permitting a coy glance up at the vast dragon. Suddenly, Spyro's bravado fluttered lower, then lower, still.

"HE'S...YOU KNOW...THINKING DUMB STUFF, LIKE THE REST OF US, IS ALL."

"Hey," Figment murmured.

"Seriously, though...Do you think that breaking the pattern we're set on...do you think that's really wise?" Cynder asked, after a lengthy pause. "What if we're *supposed* to be set on it?"

"LIKE, WE'RE *MEANT* TO SPUTTER AROUND AT RANDOM, CAUSE TROUBLE, THEN FIX IT AGAIN? SEEMS ODD TO ME. I MEAN, THE ONLY REAL UPSIDE IS, WE JUST KEEP ENDING UP BIGGER AND BETTER, HEH! THAT PART IS GREAT."

"Spyro, I...okay, I *maybe* like growing, too...I mean, we're dragons, it's a given...but really, you know there's more to this than getting big. That's secondary, at best. I think the energy that got into the candies, that keeps going into us, then into the portals in exchange for movement...there must be a reason for it. Who benefits from our getting overpowered?"

"US, OF COURSE."

"The only real answer would have to be...it benefits whatever charts our course," Figment slowly concluded. "The moment Baba Yaga confirmed this was all by design, it became the only logical answer. At least, the only one I can come up with."

"Shoot. I was hoping you wound up with a different conclusion."

"I tried."

Any fears that Ludmilla wouldn't see Bartok vanished with such speed that the bat's relief almost slipped into shock. He hadn't even been given the chance to find her—she found him.

"Mighty Bartok," an armed guardsman exclaimed, saluting, as at least four other men drew up behind. "You have returned to us!"

"*Magnificent*," Bartok started—

"Yes, indeed! Please, hero, the Regent Ludmilla demands your immediate presence! We are to escort you through Moscow at once! Come!"

The citizens turned from their general serf activities to stare and murmur, gathering into human walls that wound the streets as the entourage made for the castle. Bartok puffed himself up as best as he could; if only his old employer could see him now!

The doors to the Great Hall growled as they separated, throwing the fading daylight into its depths. The imposing sight of guards storming in from the light faded as those inside came to realize that it was five men carrying an albino bat. Interesting, it remained, but not so intimidating.

The citizenry stood hushed on either side of towering pillars as they entered, though the element had been upgraded from rabble to nobles and Lords. They stared about the same, in the end.

There, at the back of the Hall, buttressed against an oversized throne and silk curtains, sat Ludmilla, as though she had been born on it. A veil hung around the back of her head, netting blonde hair and a long braid, her demure dress and long skirt interrupted by a spiked breastplate. Slender and angular, she wore her beauty the same way one might brandish a great, gilded club: attractive, yet threatening. Suffice to say, when Ludmilla had put Bartok up to the task of rescue, it hadn't been a request. She hadn't even been smiling, so much as showing teeth.

That *was* to be expected, though. Royalty and the like, they had to be like that. Probably.

"Bartok, the Magnificent," Ludmilla announced, with a labored flourish. "So good that you have returned to us, and in such *haste*, no less! To find the mighty Baba Yaga, and to return...in perfect health...is no small feat! You've my congratulations, and Moscow's thanks. Yet, ah...where is the Prince?"

She took the bother of performatively scanning the hall, as though he were there. Whispers among the nobles became contagious. Bartok cleared his throat as the five guards all bowed to the Regent, and spread out to the pillars.

"The Prince...never left the city," Bartok declared, hands to his little hips. Ludmilla's eyes, formerly so composed, flickered the tiniest bit.

"...What?"

"Oh, yeah. Yeah, he didn't get taken off anywhere. Dat ol' witch, she didn't kidnap him, like you said. I mean, heh, not to contradict."

Ludmilla wound back up into a painfully tight ball of control, then settled internally between nodding and shaking her head as the whispers around Bartok increased.

"I see...How terrible! Then, Bartok, where is he, exactly?"

"Prince Ivan...is in the tower!"

Ludmilla pursed her lips into nonexistence, as the chatter among the nobles exploded.

"The tower?"

"Well, yeah, the tower—that...you know, that big one, right outside. Someone within the Royal system had to have done it, if he never left, y'know? Got him where he lived, an' such. I think, eh, if you go and search the tower, you'll find he's been hidden there."

"A conspiracy, then, you say," Ludmilla spoke, slowly. "Well! A charge this vile, this serious, must be attended immediately! Captain Vol, you will accompany Bartok and I to the tower, at once, and this matter shall be resolved!"

A large bearded guard behind the throne nodded, taking up his spear.

"Ah, don't worry," Bartok boasted, feeling his oats a little more with every moment. "Dat spear won't be necessary. If the kidnapper has any foul plans waiting in the tower, there, I'll tell you, I can handle 'em."

"Really?" Ludmilla asked, an eyebrow raising, despite a lifetime of merciless training.

"Oh, yeah, you bet. Dis here vial I got, yeah, a gift from Baba Yaga—powerful as I already am, and all, if'n I wanna increase my power even further, I can just take dis here, and whammo! Ten times whatever you are, on the inside! I even added my own flare, a bit, yeah, spiced it up, so maybe it's even more than ten, who knows. So ah, don't worry about any last-minute twists or threats!"

The audience went from chattering to clapping, and Bartok sponged it all up.

"Well! A gift from the witch, herself!" Ludmilla chirped, her many angles in motion as she rose from the throne. "I assure you, dear little bat...I remain *entirely* un-threatened."

That seemed reassuring enough.

"Yeah, let's go, then, sure! Off to restore the sovereignty of Moscow, folks, step aside!"

The claps and cheers followed Bartok as Ludmilla, the Regent herself, walked ahead, beckoning Captain Vol along with them. She and the bat bore satisfied smiles throughout; when the great doors shut behind them, only Bartok kept his.

The cheers vanished, and icy winds whipped into the castle and its snow-saddled Bailey, leaving only crunching steps and stony silence. Something unwanted settled in Bartok's little stomach, weighing him down.

"This tower, here?" Ludmilla asked, showing teeth. Bartok lost his voice somewhere in a patch of snow, and nodded instead.

The march up the cyclonic steps was somehow even worse. Whatever it was that nested in Bartok's insides stirred unpleasantly, warning, pleading, pulling back.

"I certainly do hope it's all as you say, Great Bartok," Ludmilla finally spoke, sharply enough to cast an echo off darkened tower walls. "Think of it...my returning to the Great Hall, empty handed...you, accused of fraud, after all of Russia's hopes were set to soar. With the Prince safe and secure, mercifully, there would be no need for repercussions."

"Beg pardon?" Bartok squeaked, suddenly frozen.

"Well, punishment *is* an ugly constant, for those in power. Necessary, but ugly. Dealing with liars and fakes especially. I can't tell you how refreshing it is, to have dealings with an honest, true

hero. It makes my job so much...*easier*, really. I just wanted you to understand, before the celebration and accolades, so that you better grasp my...trepidation. I am eager for *resolution* to such issues."

"Sure, yeah. Makes sense. Me, too."

The thought of Figment or Cynder ripping the whole tower up off its foundations and shaking the Prince out for them went from silly to desperately appealing, and as the party lighted on the last step that panic surged, nearly forcing Bartok to fly off there and then.

"Well. This is it, the end of the line," Ludmilla said, motioning at a large padlocked door lit by torchlight. Bartok fought with all he had to convince himself she had been referring to it, and not to him, instead. "Captain Vol."

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, selecting the correct key on a large ring and opening the lock, then the creaking door. Paltry as the torch was, outside the chamber, it proved enough to send a struggling column of light into the blackness within.

Had the sight at the end of that column not gotten in the way, Bartok's heart would have flown. His relief at being right meant that he was saved, but it came at the cost of seeing the good Prince there, caged in a huge ball of iron strips and spikes, curled into a ball of his own.

He glanced up at the others, hoping maybe their relief would bolster his own, but neither party reacted. Well, not the same way he was expecting.

"Goodness," Ludmilla said, with a hollow gasp. "Who could have done this!?! Captain, see to Prince Ivan, immediately!"

"Y-yes," Vol stammered, fumbling for the correct key, as he approached the cage.

The young Prince stirred at the sounds, then looked up.

"...Bartok?"

"Yer majesty! Yeah, it's me!" the bat affirmed, flapping over to a smaller round cage, suspended by an overhead chain. "Don't sound so shocked, kid! Remember a few days ago, on the city streets? Told you I could pull off anything, didn't I? What, did you think it was just a part of my act?"

"I knew you could do it," Ivan laughed, coughing a bit.

"We're all just so relieved that you were never harmed, my Prince," Ludmilla interjected, rubbing (then squeezing) her hands together. "We'll have you freed, right away!"

"So, eh, who nabbed you, Prince Ivan?" Bartok pressed.

"We had presumed Baba Yaga," Ludmilla offered.

"It was someone dressed as her," Ivan said, trying to clear a dry throat. "I don't know who."

"So, like I thought, a frame-up," Bartok sighed, shaking his head. "What kinda devious serpent

would pull somethin' so rotten?"

"The kidnapper shall be dealt with swiftly," Ludmilla asserted, as Vol opened the cage door, then stepped inside, to undo the Prince's shackles and fetters. "Not to worry."

At that, Ludmilla's surprisingly terrible grip found Bartok. The little bat easily fit in her iron grip as she snatched him with one hand, stepped nearer to the Prince's cage, and kicked the door shut, locking it with her free hand. Out the keys went from the lock, and in Bartok went, shoved callously into the smaller hanging cage.

"Ah, what the heck, there—"

"You flea-choked little rat," Ludmilla hissed, turning away from the lot of them, until she silhouetted like a stack of daggers in a dress between the door frame. "This couldn't have been any simpler. It really couldn't! And you, Vol! Really! I said to get the boy out of the way!"

Locked within the same cage as the Prince, an equally stunned Vol gawked.

"Yes, and I...I mean, I took him to the tallest tower and locked him away! How much more *out of the way* could I get him?"

"Dead, you dolt, I meant *kill* him. What are you for, if you can't manage a clean little assassination, in the dark? What kind of guard are you?"

Vol shrank back as Ludmilla pivoted, glaring all kinds of cold death at Bartok.

"And you! I sent you on an impossible quest—you, a performer, a *charlatan*, some preening little idiot barely managing a hack magic show on the streets! Yet, here you are! Returned! With *all* the answers, no less!"

"Yeah, well, I was still right, wasn't I!" Bartok shot back, pushing all his courage to the front, regardless of how fake it was. "And when you go back empty-handed—"

"What? I'll be in trouble? We're the only ones who know what's going on! I'll say you tricked us all, tricked all of Moscow! You were working with Vol, the true kidnapper, all along! But you double-crossed him, using your knowledge to get close enough to steal the poor Prince away, for your own ransom! Yes, all those *great magical powers* were too much for Vol! And I alone will bear the burden of justice for Russia's beloved Prince! You see that, Bartok the Magnificent? It's easy to lie. Maybe you'll rest well here, knowing that a kindred spirit understands you."

Through her monologue, Bartok was at work on the vial, trying to force its snap-top off.

Geez, Baba Yaga had put this one on, tight!

"And as for *this*—"

Ludmilla's steel trap of a hand snapped into Bartok's cage and snatched the vial away cleanly.

"Hey!"

"I'll take this," the Regent purred, as she made for the door. On the way, her free hand took hold of a long iron lever, and pulled it down. "Dasvidaniya."

The support mechanisms below cracked and snapped away, and the floor collapsed into to bits, fragments tumbling into inky waters below. Bartok's cage remained steady, but the Prince's cage heaved down, snapping back into a sway as the larger chain caught, then twisted and swung in the open air. Down beneath yawned the unlit maw of a vast and terrible stone well, as splashes echoed up.

"Poor Bartok," Ludmilla sneered, from above, standing in the safety of the opened door. "After coming so far, and doing so much, you'll only be remembered by Russia as a *liar*. Too bad."

"You can't seriously—"

The door slammed shut, intentionally, ending the conversation, and the silence that crept in after the slam faded off was somehow even worse.

"Are you okay, Ivan?" Bartok finally asked, once the larger cage had settled into stillness.

"I...I'm alright," Ivan's voice answered, bouncing its way up along stone walls. "I'm so sorry you were pulled into this mess, Bartok..."

"Ah, I'm not really worried about the whole *indefinite imprisonment* thing, yer highness."

"You're not?"

"Really?" Vol balked, his voice joining in.

"Nah...I mean, okay, I got a little residual upset goin' on, sure, but I got friends outside dat she doesn't know about. Yeah, I got me a big contingency plan, there. Dat's my plan B."

"When will they come, then? Ludmilla has all of Russia's army at her call, now! I...wait, plan B? W...what's plan A, then?"

"This," Bartok answered, searching through his white fur with pink hands. "I mean, you can't really see it from down dere, yeah, but I got somethin'..."

He undid a thin string, tied so tightly about his midsection that his fur covered it completely, and he pulled out another vial, filled with a swirling blue-green mixture. He almost boasted about how he was even smaller and thinner than he looked, sans fur, but opted not to embarrass himself.

"Whatever it is, if it gets us free, I say do it," Prince Ivan said. "I saw you performing in the streets...I know you can do *real* magic!"

"Just, please, do whatever you're going to do, bat!" Vol added. "Why hesitate?"

"Eh, because this'll probably hurt a pretty good bit, here...s'why," Bartok muttered, looking the well-built steel bands of his cage over. "Knew I shoulda taken dis back before dat door opened..."

He fussed with the snap-top, until it popped off, and gulped, readying to drink it all.

"Ten times," Ludmilla pondered smugly as she stood outside the chamber door, admiring the vial. "Times times more powerful than I already am...ten times more *beautiful*..."

Her eyes lit up at that part. The temptation being much too great, she took the vial and easily snapped the top off, tossing it carelessly aside.

"Ten times more persuasive, more compelling, too...I could sell the public on anything. How devilishly perfect!"

The vial arced up to Ludmilla's lips, and she downed the green-gold mixture with one astonishingly-sustained gulp. Away the vial went, empty, and down the stairs she moved, waiting for it—waiting for that feeling, the increase, the power. A glow, an aura, lightning from the fingertips, any variety would do.

What came, instead, was a profound tingle from within, one so strong that it near-instantly tumbled into a violent, rumbling doom.

"At work for me, already, is it?" she hummed, despite a restrained flicker of panic. It too was squelched as she descended, control momentarily upheld. "I *do* suppose I have a lot to work with—"

BUMPH

The sound of her ascension came, not with the heralding trumpets of cherubs nor with the sound and fury of some god in the flesh, but with a *bounce*. What was bouncing nearly caused her to tumble over, for two reasons. One of them was the sudden burst of size her breasts undertook, and the other was the momentum of the burst, enough to cause her to pitch forward and correct at the last moment. Raw surprise might have been a third, but there wasn't time to consider anything further, as her breastplate quivered and blasted off with a metallic ping.

"What—"

Her bosom hung out ahead of her like a new entity, eager to explore the world, and dragging her forward with it. Any frontal sight of her hips vanished as both mounds bulged further, stretching her overtaxed bra like a prisoner on a rack (which, *Spyro might have maintained*, it was). Those same neglected hips ballooned out, jealous and wanting, booming so wide that her skirt caught, stretched, and *split* mid-seam.

"—is—"

Her roughening skin darkened, dropping from pale beige to a menacing degree of pink. Creases formed into networks, which latticed into scales; her feet billowed too large, stretching both shoes into bulges, then bursting through them, claws jutting out of swelling toes. She lurched back, mid-step, her lithe and graceful arms darkening as they bulked from twigs to logs, her hands inflating into monstrous pink paws. Each one slammed with alarming power into the side walls as Ludmilla steadied herself, only to shudder and blow up larger, altogether.

"-h-happen...ing!?"

Her voice, so dainty and shrill, dropped low, skipping whole octaves and going right to a demonic growl. Her bust began to even out with her body as a reptilian belly rapidly swelled out, pushing her breasts higher, just as her neck began to elongate, taking her head with it. A round, hefty midsection surged out, bouncing her chest up against her thickening neck as her tortured dress ripped away, letting thick mounds of pink scale inflate into the open.

All the while, Ludmilla forced her changing body down the stairwell, her size climbing higher and wider, to the point where she had to squeeze herself back out of the tower's double-doors. As she strained, her neck pushed longer, and her face did the same as a lengthy muzzle crept out from where her nose had been, growing into a full-on snout. Two stripe-patterned horns poked out from behind her head, her teeth curving into hooked knives as she grit them.

"GAH!"

The front molding to the tower door blew apart as her sides trembled and ballooned too big, sending a shower out onto the snow-covered Bailey. One thick foot slammed down onto it, then another. By the time the latter arrived, both feet had already swollen larger. In fact, all of Ludmilla's transformation was capped by one alarming factor: no matter what kept changing, she was *growing*.

"A...t-TRICK..."

Her voice rattled in her swelling throat like a muffled explosion, the newly-minted dragoness stomping forward, wobbling and adjusting, only to readjust as her twenty-foot tall body blew up to thirty, in one hot, pumping push of growth.

"A SCHEMING...VICIOUS...TRIIIIICK!"

Her muzzle went skyward as Ludmilla's rage boiled and gathered, then gushed forth, blasting out in a cruel streak of hellfire. Even as she vented the pressure continued to build, as her entire body shook, then blew up even larger. Her draconic haunches billowed wider, her breasts tearing away the last strips of cloth away as she continued to grow. 50 feet lopsidedly expanded to 60, her neck suddenly blowing out wider, longer.

Her shoulders swelled into boulders, fresh cliques of muscle joining as her biceps uncontrollably exploded, her triceps outpacing them in twin eruptions of power. Her back scales stretched audibly from the stress of containing bursting shoulder blades as her hips swelled as wide as her torso was, tall. Her calves *boom-boomed* out, out, and by the time Ludmilla finally finished blowing out a howl of fire, she stood a terrifying 70 feet tall.

As she returned from her meltdown, dark smoke curling from the edges of her scowl, the crowd of nobles and Lords and Ladies all clambered outside, to see what the tremor and fuss was about; the answer came, and was sent back, as the entire court erupted in shock and dismay, screaming as they fled the courtyard.

"N...NO! MY PEOPLE--"

Another torrent of fire belched out, melting the snow and leaving a telltale row of steaming

stonework below. She felt her throat over, and scowled so hard, it made the previous one look like a happy little grin. Even then, she was still growing, her scaled musculature and chest blowing out even further, packing more startling mass onto an 80-foot body.

"BAR...TOK!"

As the populace moved out into the city, Ludmilla turned back to the tower, her wrath in tow. One colossal scaly fist bashed into the tower's side, then the other, again and again; with every thump, each fist swelled bigger, heavier, shaking the outer structure more and more. The more her anger rose, the larger her body rose, with it, 100 feet of enraged reptilian female shuddering up to 110, then 120, pushing nearer to the top of the tower, itself.

"YOU MISERABLE, LYING, LITTLE CHEAT!"

Both cages began a pendulous dance, swaying uneasily over oblivion as the entire tower began to shake and rattle, as though some passing storm was battering it. Bartok's hesitation finally lost out, and he forced the mixture down his throat, gulp by gulp. At his size, a full vial of fluid was tantamount to drinking half his own body, so...it took a minute.

"Ah, almost got it," the tiny bat huffed, gulping one extra time, before catching his breath. "Stuff's pretty good, but geez, it's thick, boy..."

The last of it went down, grudgingly, as movement below stirred in the larger cage.

"How's it going up there, Bartok?" Ivan asked, just as the bat finished.

"Can't rush not-choking," Bartok coughed, before sighing in relief, his belly fuller than he ever had dreamed it could get. Thoughts of not needing (or wanting) to eat ever again were knocked away, however, as his stomach rumbled, and rumbled *badly*.

"Oh, whoo, okay," Bartok muttered, nervous enough as it was.

"Any luck, up there?" Vol asked.

"Hey, hold yer horses, you'll know when I—"

The growth spurt *attacked* Bartok as it blew his tiny body up in a frantic explosion of fur and bulk. His sides mashed against the cage, bulges forcing its bands apart. The nub of his tail extended out, shuddering, then shooting out into a lengthy reptile tail caked in white fur. Pink spikes popped out in a row down its span, before it grew again, flopping out of the now-struggling cage.

Ivan and Vol both backed away in their own cage, watching in morbid fascination as the smaller cage above started to warp out and snap, bands of metal pinging loose, then curling away as the bat's quaking body body roared up even bigger, bunching and inflating through any opening it could.

"What's happening?" Ivan gasped. Vol simply shook his head at varying speeds.

"HHHPH GHHHHZ," Bartok wailed, or tried to, groaning and grunting as the cage partially contained his growth; the lingering resistance made his furred chest blow up against his lengthening

muzzle, burying it between two swelling pectorals. His backside billowed uncontrollably, blowing out the back of the cage, making the now-lopsided thing tilt right. His growing bulk sagged towards it, more and more muscle and white fluff and spikes pushing angrily free, so much so that he nearly exploded out.

"He's...oh, he's getting...*huge*," Ivan gulped, backing further away, as Bartok's clumped-up bulk shook angrily, then ballooned so much bigger that he exploded out of the remainder of the cage, his curled mass easily outgrowing not only its dimensions, but that of the Prince's cage as well!

"H-he's going to stop, right?" Vol asked, just as Bartok unfurled, his muscled arms lashing out for balance, uselessly flapping two monstrous, sail-sized wings as he revealed his now-draconic body.

"Hah, G-GEEZ!" Bartok growled, his teeth growing and growing into thick white daggers, his muzzle bearing the pink blot of color that used to be his bat-nose, at the end of a slender, rather lovely snout. His large ears remained, even as two dark-pink horns pushed out from behind his head.

Given the size of the remaining, versus the width available to them, the diameter of the well had to have been roughly 30 feet, across. Bartok was filling that gap, and way too fast. He snorted and flicked his pink tongue as his arms struck out, one big, pink, clawed hand thumping on each wall. Even as he held himself in place, Bartok closed his eyes and rumbled worse, hissing and blowing up even bigger, faster! His elbows and wings bumped the walls, then his belly, which surged hotly in against them, wedging the furry dragon in tight, and damming the well with his growth.

Thankfully he had sagged lower, dragging down from sheer weight, and had skidded down enough to where he slipped below Ivan's cage, then swelled up underneath it as he filled the hole. This forced the cage to rest atop Bartok's surprisingly massive, bulging chest, giving Ivan and a terrified Vol full view of his gigantic muzzle, between the bars.

"Bartok, that's incredible!" Ivan shouted, as Bartok's pectorals boomed up, up, up, rising like dough over his chin. The dragon snorted hard, buffeting them with air, and when his pink eyes opened, they were each bigger than Ivan...no, Vol!

"YEAH, WELL...T-THANKS A BUNCH, YER MAJESTY, THAT'S...THAT'S, AH, REAL GOOD OF YA TO SAY...HUH, HUUUAHHH, I J-JUST..."

"What?"

"I EH...I CAN FEEL...HO-BOY, YEAH, I'M GONNA...GET...*B-BUH-BIIIIIGGG*—"

The shaking from outside was immediately overpowered as Bartok's own quaking outpaced it. The 50-foot tall fur-dragon was already damming the well so tightly that his growth spurt traveled through every bit of the tower, making brick and mortar split and shift as he rolled his eyes back and whimpered, then roared, feeling his body *explode*.

Outside, Ludmilla raged on, now over 150 feet tall. With a frustrated snarl she headbutted the tower exterior, pulling back only because of the webbing cracks forming along it. She grinning cruelly, imagining her attacks were getting strong enough to bear fruit. After all, what else could it have been?

"HAH! BETTER! I'LL CRUSH YOU INTO DUST, YOU FRAIL, LITTLE—"

All the terrible dragoness managed to see was something furry exploding out of the tower in a herculean rush, decimating it. A great wall of white fur shoved the gigantic female back, before swelling up and over her, smothering her into the ground as she bellowed frantically—or, tried to. On and on the cascading swell boomed, churning and throbbing, blowing up...and up...and up...

"DID WE EVEN AGREE ON A SIGNAL?" Spyro asked, making the other three dragons look up high at him. "I MEAN, IT'S BEEN A BIT, RIGHT?"

"I was kind of hoping to wait, in good faith," Cynder replied, rubbing up at her thick, bulky neck. "Do you think things went...South?"

"DON'T THEY ALWAYS?"

"Maybe we should give him another minute," Figment offered, shrugging. "See if there are any celebratory fireworks, and the like?"

Toothless was asleep again, having curled up against the side of a tall cliff. His chest swelled in and out as he absently snored, grinning wide.

"HE GOT CREAMED, I BET."

"Another minute!" Figment countered.

"*CREAMED.*"

From the Southern districts of Moscow a single *boom* rang, alarming, yet uninformative. The three of them whipped to attention as a spire of smoke blew up into the air, over the city, only to be followed by a rushing, vertical heave of...something. Something *white*.

"What...what is that?" Cynder asked, squinting.

"HOLY SMOKES! NO WAY!" Spyro barked, shaking the forests with just his voice.

"What?" Figment asked. "W-what in the world is that?"

A massive cluster of bulging ivory muscles and wind-wavered fur ballooned up over the streets and rooftops, and when it blew up yet again, surging hotly beyond 300 feet, then 400, then 500, and just kept on rising higher and higher, still, they realized it.

"HAHAHAHA!" Spyro cackled, terribly amused. "I LOVE IT! HE WENT FULL DRAGON ON US! ALRIGHT, Bartok! THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!"

True enough, when the massive beast roared into the skies and unfurled a set of white wings with brilliant pink insides, and when two humongous, adorable bat-ears popped up on either side of thick, ever-swelling ram horns, they could see who it was, who it *had* to have been. A streak of bright pink stained his muzzle-tip, where his former nose had been. Two massive clawed dragon feet thudded down onto panicked streets, bulldozing whole rows of factories and houses, leaving ant-sized dots of

very confused citizens clinging to his growing fur and scales.

"The potion...worked *THAT* well!?" Figment gasped, as he and Cynder suddenly had to look up, and up, from far away in the forests. "He's...getting...huge!"

Bartok, the dragon, swelled with incalculable oceans of pure muscle, his neck and shoulders bulging so thick and monstrous that they pressed into each other, as his groaning lats burst wider, lifting his bulky arms higher. A massive tail whipped into a high loop, before helplessly slamming down, casting a tall cloud up behind his 600-foot body.

"AH, FER C...C-CRYIN' OUT LOUD!" Bartok boomed, his voice shaking the landscape as he panted and strained, then blew up even bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

Row after row of evacuated buildings were caught under his rump and thighs as he expanded relentlessly, his biceps pulsing with absolute power, his thick pectorals swelling out with every breath, yet never receding back to humility. His neck ballooned out into a massive pillar as he grunted and moaned, then burst so much bigger that the entire block vanished under his throbbing mass.

"I...don't think he meant to get this big," Cynder gulped, looking higher and higher up.

"Agreed," Figment sighed, looking up to Spryo. "I think he needs assistance, Spyro! We had better get absorbing, before he gets any larger!"

"JUST SO YOU BOTH KNOW, I WAITED TO MAKE SURE YOU SAID IT, NOT ME," Spyro bellowed, grinning wide overhead. **"I CAN HOLD OFF, THANK YOU!"**

"Hah, okay, okay, point taken!" Cynder ceded, as the violet mountain of a dragon stood back up to his 2-mile size. "You were very good!"

"I WAS THINKING, *DIGNIFIED*. WATCH OUT, HERE I GO!"

Despite his bravado, Spyro considerately motioned for them to move aside before his colossal feet boomed out across the landscape. Over ten thousand feet tall, it was simple enough for him to make good time into the outer rim of the city, and by the time he got there, to his own shock, Bartok was already nearly half his size, sitting down.

"LOOKING FINE, BAT!" Spyro laughed, wagging his enormously muscled tail. **"NOT BAD! I ADMIT, YOU MAKE A GREAT DRAGON! HOW'D YOU LIKE A HAND?"**

"G-GET BACK," Bartok huffed, groaning loudly, as another wave of growth bulged against his body, from within. His fur tightened loudly, holding it in. **"AH, I'M G-GONNA EXPLODE, HERE!"**

"HUH? OH, NAH, I GOT YOU, BUDDY, HERE..."

Spyro's massive paws thumped against Bartok's huge chest, and the panting bat-dragon watched, his confusion mounting—until Spyro erupted bigger, instead of him.

"GEEZ!" he boomed, pink eyes wide, as the dragon's body erupted larger, pumping him so massive that in one flowing gush he loomed three times larger, now six miles in size, leaving Bartok

gasping for air, at a meager one. **"GEEZ!!"**

"HEHE, RIGHT? IMPRESSIVE, HUH? WATCH THIS!"

Bartok did indeed watch. The next spurt building up within him suddenly vanished, leaping into Spyro, his purple paws ballooning even bigger, thickening fingers and claws gently covering more and more of the bat-dragon's bulk. Spyro's toothy grin vanished behind his pectorals as they stretched and grew, the muscle bound male bursting up to 8 miles, then 10!

Two violet feet swelled bigger and wider, smashing over the forests and snowy hilltops, toes bigger than castles booming even larger over the terrain! They spread out on either side of the capitol as Spyro shuddered, pressing his growing warm palms tighter to Bartok, and grunting as he inflated all the way up to 13 miles, taking and taking and taking.

"He's really getting good at that," Figment observed, watching as Spyro's hulking body stretched and bulged, getting even bigger still, pouring out larger and stronger over the landscape, until half of Moscow was engulfed in his shadow.

"I'll make sure not to tell him you said so," Cynder retorted, turning around and thumping heavily over to Toothless, while Spyro swelled up into the clouds in the distance, huffing and licking his muzzle over, not bothering to conceal his delight. "His head's big enough."

Just as she reached out to touch Toothless to tap on his bulk and wake him, the earth itself seemed to shudder. A rolling vibration swept underfoot, shaking the snow off of the forests, and quaking the mountains. Even Spyro wobbled a bit, the 30-mile tall dragon thudding heavily back, leaving the mile-tall Bartok seated awkwardly atop Moscow. All the fuss and panic and confusion preceding went quiet as the still world rested, then pulsed again, harder.

"WHAT DE—" Bartok started, when the streets under and around him snapped and cracked, segments of rock splitting and rising, carrying entire neighborhoods and businesses and churches and banks off with them as Moscow—the city of Moscow, itself—crumbled and lurched into the air.

Spyro watched, slack-jawed, as a thick wave of scales burst up, and up, and up, and up, and up, and up, birthing out of the city, out of the earth itself. The highest sections of Moscow broke off and slid back, revealing a city-sized lump, which only stretched and blew up bigger, still, separating the city districts like they were mere lilies on some disturbed pond.

"Gracious!" Figment shouted, Toothless fluttering awake, Cynder staring out with them over the hills and valleys, seeing Moscow shatter to bits...as a dragoness surged up into the skies themselves, looming so titanic, so massive, that Bartok found himself yelping as he clung to a rising single breast, holding on like a small lizard. "Who on Earth—"

Beyond the immense bust and swollen nipples, up past a neck so large it was partly lost to the clouds beyond, a horrid, seething roar blasted loose. Below the clouds, her overgrown breasts swelled even larger, heavier and fuller, as a vast scaly belly ballooned out after, forcing the cracking landscape higher and higher. A set of monumental hips burst up, further spreading the cratered gouge in the world, snapping the valleys apart as they relentlessly grew and grew.

Chunks of city that would have taken a horse ten minutes to gallop across fell off like bits of dirt, getting lost between the creases in each scale, as the dark-pink dragon endlessly emerged. A hand bigger than a mountain smashed down, shaking the countryside, flattening part of a range with no trouble, only for its thick fingers to swell over the ruins they created, still growing and growing.

A completely humongous muzzle dipped slowly back down, blowing the clouds away. The math came to Figment quickly, and they weren't comforting. She had to have been over 50 miles, easily, from belly to muzzle, and that was with her huge neck craned down. Unbelievable muscles exploded bigger and bigger, straining her scaly hide as she closed her huge eyes, trembled lewdly, then *doubled* in size, and *DOUBLED* again, obliterating the land around her booming, hot, titanic body.

"B...BBBBBAAAAAAR...T-T-T...OOOOOOOOOOK!!!"

9.

The thought of running away ran right by, leaving a stunned Figment and Cynder behind as Ludmilla came to them without the bother of moving forward. All of Moscow relocated as the split portions of the capitol slid apart and fractured, again and again, mere motes upon Ludmilla's ever-growing mass. Over 400 miles in size, well over two million feet tall, the terrible dragoness conjured a cataclysmic growl, pressing her expanding breasts down onto the cracking earth. Each voluminous globe bulged and stretched, billowing out over hills and roads as her hands continued to swell bigger on either side, now wider than entire cities.

She swept the dwindling landscape with burning eyes, focusing a world's worth of rage down into a laser point as she searched for Bartok.

This, naturally, put the other dragons in her way, along with everything else. There was no time to dodge as a vast pink bicep crashed into the forests upon which Figment, Cynder and Toothless stood. The collision was quick and brutal, and the tiny party could only hang on as the scales they clung to grew wider and thicker, spreading further and further apart. She was so massive, in fact, that Figment found himself briefly fitting between two plates, which stretched on into infinity.

"WATCH—"

Was all Spyro managed, as the 30-mile dragon's vast musculature met Ludmilla's, and Ludmilla won. A monster-sized shoulder buffeted him, shoving him back acre upon acre, each sinew swelling into a canyon against him. His hands slapped onto her as Spyro hugged tight, only to bellow wildly as the power flow nearly knocked him out cold.

Words collapsed in his throat as it swelled, his neck doubling in width; Spyro's wings trembled and jutted farther out, his back muscles exploding into vast fields of scale and brawn as he tried to contain the power he was absorbing. His back overtook his front, his biceps exploding in greedy gulp against surging pectorals, his head comparatively minute against waves of tidal bulk. Ludmilla didn't even notice as her expansion slowed, and slowed, too worked up to comprehend Spyro's presence, as he strained and trembled and boomed up past 60 miles to her 600...then 90 miles to her 700...then 150 to her 600...

"HOOOLLLEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEYYY C-COOOOOOOWWWW!!"

All he got for his trouble was a sky-splitting blast of a roar as Ludmilla began to grunt and strain again, another massive growth spurt booming through her body. The 180-mile tall Spyro grit his teeth and braced as the vile dragoness cried out and burst even larger, messily spurting to 800 miles, which funneled into Spyro so forcefully that he nearly burst. His purple arms tensed, flexing impossibly tight as he buried his muzzle in between surging pectorals, moaning into them. He blew up and up, his muscles punching upwards in a heated surge as he billowed past 220 miles, shook, whined, then blasted up *bigger*, passing 260 miles, then 290!

Not this fast, he pleaded, to whatever force could hear. *Just...gimme a sec!*

A second time, Ludmilla began to slow back down, then dwindle smaller, her 900-mile tall body deflating back to 800; Spyro cried into his bulbous plated chest muscles as the surging growth blew in, booming him tighter, bigger, stronger, thicker, raging up to 350 miles.

"We can't just hang around here!" Cynder shouted, watching as the scale to which she clung expanded larger than her, seeing Figment riding another set of growing scales. "I don't think Spyro can handle *this* much size, this fast!"

"Agreed!" Figment shouted, less than a flea in comparison to Ludmilla's muscled body. He scoured down below, seeing the snowy forests sink lower, below. "If we just had some sort of..."

"What!?" Cynder shouted, even further away now.

Figment didn't answer. The dragon was too concerned with a thin line cutting through the woodlands, parting little treetops the faintest bit.

"Toothless!" he shouted, making the half-asleep colossus awaken fully. "Toothless, see down there, in the trees?"

The nine-hundred foot Toothless yawned, opening sleepy green eyes, as he rested on the high slope of Ludmilla's bicep. He perked his fins, looked to Figment, then looked to where he was pointing.

"See that?" Figment repeated, loudly. "Go grab that, would you? Bring it here! Quick!"

Toothless' tongue poked out, then slipped back in, before a toothy grin appeared in its stead. Flexing vast black muscles and scales, he arched his thick back, planted his huge feet, extended both wings and vaulted off, careening down into the landscape below.

"What're you doing?" Cynder hollered, clawing her way from the edges of impossible scales to reach him. "Where is Toothless—"

"Watch and see!" Figment replied, smiling, as Ludmilla's growth slowed down yet again, and Spyro's huffs and wheezes of exertion echoed over the behemoth's other side.

Toothless' larger self shot up through the air and landed between them, and he had exactly what he was supposed to. Within both huge hands, he held a small house. Its bird-legs kicked madly,

scrabbling in the air, as Toothless offered it to Figment.

"Perfect! Great work!"

"Baba Yaga's home!?" Cynder balked, looking it over, as a clawed bird foot nearly scratched her. "I don't understand, Fig, what's that going to do?"

"Thanks," Figment said, grinning, as the much-bigger Toothless handed him the house. To Figment, it was a decent armful, and its blind struggling didn't help much. Toothless nodded once, puffing his thick chest proudly. "This, here, is going to buy us some time! We...just might be in for an earful, after it's done!"

At that, Figment opened the door, turned the house over, and placed the side with the opening flat to Ludmilla's gargantuan bicep. It only took a moment, before the shift began: the prairie of pink scales and muscle suddenly pinched against the house, before it was sucked clear in, and fast. In moments, the entirety of Ludmilla's vast arm vanished within, followed by a shoulder, before her breasts and neck and belly followed after. More and more of the startled giantess slipped inside, her wide eyes and bellowing muzzle the last things to enter, before the door slammed shut.

This, of course, replaced the mass that they were upon with nothing, so there was a momentary freefall, then a crash onto devastated terrain, capped by plenty of smoke and confusion.

"Oh," Cynder coughed, waving the soot away. "She's going to be mad at us, I bet."

Figment slid off of Toothless, having landed safely on the bigger dragon's thick bulk.

"Well, I think she'll let us know, pretty quickly."

"OH, THANK GOODNESS," an incredibly huge, thick, powerful voice boomed, as a vast shadow engulfed them all. **"I THOUGHT I WAS GONNA BLOW..."**

Spyro, while not having reached the apocalyptic size of Ludmilla, still remained a mind-breaking 500 miles tall, bigger than he had ever been before, by a healthy margin. His head was lost to the clouds, even as he stayed low, his stupendous pectorals pressing the country-sized crater Ludmilla had created even further down. One hand covered an entire mountain range, the other barely sank at all into a wide lake. His chin alone hovered overhead, like an upside down world, unfathomable muscles bulging and twitching in the hazy atmosphere beyond.

"You did great!" Cynder cheered, making Spyro wait a moment for the sound to reach. After a moment he blushed and grinned lopsidedly through the heavens, restraining a laugh.

"You're getting good at this, Spyro!" Figment offered, as he set the little house down, then stepped back as it circled angrily in place, then squatted on both legs.

"HEHE, THANKS! SO, HOW'D YOU BANISH HER?"

"Well, the house—"

That same little door flew back open with a slam, and its pull yanked all four dragons in. There was a now-familiar rush of air, then a stretching and a howl of motion, before the entire party rolled to a stop upon Baba Yaga's living room floor.

"You fools!"

Figment winced, then opened his eyes to an indeed quite-unhappy Baba Yaga. There was some shock, however, given how she loomed over them all; this time, each of them stood knee high to the witch, despite their intact bulk. She fumed, pacing back and forth, holding a bird cage up in one hand. Within it was Ludmilla, her body swelling and surging violently, bloating to fill it. The cage sparkled brightly on contact, then forced her to whittle smaller again, until she was about the size of a sparrow. By the time Baba Yaga finished one cycle of pacing, Ludmilla roared, shook, and bulged even larger again, straining the cage tremendously tight, before it shrank her once again. As this happened, she continued on:

"Which one of you did it? Which of you tampered with my potion!? It was already an incredibly powerful mixture, without whatever you did to it! What *idiot* would ever need that much overwhelming power?"

"Tampered?" Figment asked, cocking his head. "We didn't do anything of the sort!"

"Right," Cynder added, as Toothless and Spyro shrugged at each other. "We're huge, we didn't need more power. The only one here that really needed the potion to begin with was—"

"Bartok," Baba Yaga groaned, shaking her head. Again, Ludmilla exploded in size, booming so big that the magical cage started to stretch too far, struggling harder to force her back down. "That sneaky dolt! Pah! Had he only trusted my power...well, where is he? I've a piece of my mind to share!"

The four dragons looked one another over, then back up at her, smiling weakly.

"Well, we don't think he's with us..." Figment said, as the interior suddenly grew dark inside. A massive shadow fell over it, over the ruins, over the vast crater the house was busy traversing.

"That's probably him," Spyro ventured, going to the window to check.

Far, far, *far* above, a monumentally big, pink, clawed foot boomed down, shaking the countryside. The entire house hardly seemed big enough to compete with the very tip of one toe claw, which dug into the cratered soil a moment, dug in deeper, then swelled even *bigger*.

"Yup," Spyro finished, huffing out smoke. "He was growing a ton before I started absorbing his size. If he had anything similar to what that other crazy dragoness had, and I'm not there to help..."

"He'll grow absolutely *immense*," Figment concluded, gulping.

"HAH, C'MON, HERE, STOPPIT," Bartok begged, snorting, as the bat-dragon grimaced and boomed even bigger, and bigger, and *bigger*. One moment Spyro had been helping him, and his growth was starting to let up...then wham, some huge *whatever* blew up into their business and

in seconds his body had started rocketing larger, all over again!

By the time that pink mass had vanished Bartok loomed so big that, even slamming back down onto all fours, he was approaching the clouds. One mile had violently detonated to 5 miles, then 10, then 20; only a minute had maybe passed since, and already Bartok was as big as Moscow was wide, several times over. The 50-mile behemoth groaned and trembled tight, ridiculously big muscles flexing underneath waves of stretching scale and white fur. His wings remained bat-like, surging out longer and wider behind his hulking arms, which blew up through the upset clouds as he wrinkled his adorable pink snout, gasped, and quiver-boomed up to a full 100 miles.

"GAH, AH, SHOOT... TOO BIG, TOO BIG, GOSH..."

A hand big enough to scoop mountains sank ever-deeper into the ground as his tail lengthened out, his neck pushing longer, his horns swelling even thicker and heavier atop his handsome head. Massive ears pricked and swiveled as a whole cloud bank drifted into one, and made him yelp.

"WHOO, AH, COLD! GOOD GRAVY, HOW BIG AM I GONNA GET!? GETTING... A BIT TOO M-MAGNIFICENT..."

Bartok's growth halted a moment, the pressure stopping long enough for the dragon to take stock of himself. His body lurched out even larger with his next breath, swelling even stronger, raw power overloading his senses. He raised one monstrous arm and flexed, and his vast pink eyes widened in awe as an ivory bicep peaked higher, and higher, and higher, and higher.

"GEEZ, THAT... OKAY, Y'KNOW, DAT AIN'T BAD..."

Still, Bartok grew, the sounds of his billowing body filling the air. 150 miles of godlike brawn snuggled in, throbbing tighter and hotter, his pumped chest swelling out and out with every massive puff and pant. His teeth swelled larger, his jawline thickening pleasantly, as his horns curled even larger, his body growing more and more draconic.

He saw below where the deep imprint of his hand rested, moments ago. It could have made a small lake, had rainfall been able to fill it. Docile as he normally was, when Bartok let his hand thump back down, and when he realized it completely dwarfed the print from earlier, he shuddered.

"HEY... HEH... I AIN'T TOO BAD LOOKIN', I TELL YA! OH, NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE A BIG GUY, LIKE THIS, HECK..."

Unwisely encouraged, Bartok's body burgeoned up past 200 miles, then 300, in two monstrous surges, forcing his bulk to stretch across the entire realm like a storm cloud. He didn't notice the speck-

sized house scrambling around below as he arched his powerful, sky-blocking back muscles, snorted, and dumbly sat down, directly on it.

The dim light within the house dropped to total blackness as Bartok's oceanic rump contacted the center of Ludmilla's crater, the aftershock shaking the land for miles. Bartok's long tongue hung out of a huffing muzzle as he rolled his eyes back, shuddered deeply, and grew...and grew...and grew...and grew...and GREW! His furry, scaly rear ballooned across Ludmilla's crater as he filled it rapidly, his eyes lidding happily, surrendering to an overwhelming gush of pleasure and size.

"He sat on us!" Cynder balked, having to peer up over the rim of the house window. "He really sat on us!"

"I'm more surprised we survived, at all," Spyro mumbled, sounding more envious than harmed.

"Bah, the weight of the world could not scratch my home," Baba dismissively grunted as a magically-animated candle lit itself, then floated around behind her and the cage. Toothless chased after it, like an activated kitten. "Not even the weight of his stupidity can manage that—as staggering as it is!"

"Is...that cage...going to fare as well as the house?" Figment asked.

"No."

"Can you open the door, and suck Bartok back in?" Cynder asked. "Shrink him like you did with us? Then, we could figure out how to cure him, and...uh, whoever this monster is—"

"Ludmilla!" the fuchsia dragoness roared, suddenly growling and swelled uncontrollably larger, pushing the cage's bars farther and farther apart, until she shrank back down again. "Mmmph—guh! I am...Ludmilla...the Regent of...rrrrgh!"

She shook her muzzle, her eyes flickering between mindless rage and a woman's wrath.

"Whatever was inside of her that the potion brought out is getting stronger and stronger, yet," Baba Yaga muttered. "The potion on its own would have been bad, but now, at this level of power..."

"It was the candies from my bag, it had to be," Figment said, sighing. "Bartok undid the strap to it, the last time we were here, so logically...he threw them into the potion. Likely to boost it more."

Even the great witch's face paled, in the low light of the candle.

"Then, she is not done, yet...and neither is that foolish bat, out there."

"But...Bartok is a good guy, at heart," Cynder said, though carefully. "He turned into a dragon, even! A...pretty beautiful dragon, actually..."

Spyro snorted a darker plume of smoke, though even he ended up nodding.

"His *nature* is good, yes," Baba sighed. "But the potion brings out what is inside. What is *also*

inside of Bartok is a ceaselessly self-centered, glory-chasing blowhard..."

"Well, either way, why not suck him into the house?" Cynder insisted.

"I would...but the door," the old witch muttered, pointing helpfully towards it. "Can you not tell? He sat on us...with the door *facing the ground*."

What sounded (and felt) like thunder filled the cold silence that followed; it only took a moment for the lot of dragons to understand what the sensation was, in reality—it was no storm. It was the rumbling of Bartok's worsening growth, outside.

"Well, what are our options, then?" Figment pondered, his tail thumping erratically. "Whether he's aware of himself or lost to growth, it doesn't matter if we can't get to him..."

"Let...me...loose..." Ludmilla snarled, offering a demand. "I'll...rip that...pompous little...sn-sneak apart, myself..."

Yet again, she blew up bigger; this time, she swelled so large that even Baba Yaga's arm lowered from the weight, as Ludmilla ballooned big enough to snap off one of the cage's strips. She had nearly swollen to half the witch's size, before the cage forced her back down.

"Can we open a window, then?" Cynder asked, as the rumbling outside grew stronger and stronger, still. "Maybe suck him in here through it?"

"Only the door opens," Baba Yaga replied, flatly.

"Maybe he's almost done growing," Spyro mused, shrugging his huge shoulders.

"There's no way to tell," Figment fretted, pacing in time with Baba Yaga, and nearly tripping over a casual Toothless. "On their own, I doubt he would have blown up this big, nor would she...but mixed with that potion, there, it's quite anyone's guess!"

Ludmilla glanced over at the hearth and cauldron within, filled with the remaining potion.

"Even if we got free," Cynder began, "Bartok's surely outclassed us by a landslide...even Spyro might not be able to bring him down enough to stop him."

"Well, I'm game for trying," Spyro replied, folding his bulky arms as best he could. "I'm getting better at it, the more I try! Only, how do we get back out of here, then? Take a portal?"

Figment lit up, stopping mid-stride, and Toothless bumped into him.

"Yes. Yes, that's worth trying!" he said, stroking his chin over.

"Hopping to another world, now?" Cynder groaned. "We'd be abandoning—"

"No, no, a portal, *within* this world!" Figment answered, wagging faster. "Why not? I'll imagine where we were earlier, and..."

Baba Yaga watched, interested, as Figment closed his eyes and concentrated. Within a few seconds a small blue portal flickered and spread out, big enough for any of the four dragons to fit through. She leaned in behind him and saw the snowy mountains and woods beyond—then gasped, at the sight of Bartok, looming higher and higher over them all.

"Oro," she gasped, leaning away as abruptly as she had leaned in.

Bartok was beyond big, now. *Big* was no longer big enough to suffice. Mile upon mile of white, swollen muscles poured out, throbbing with unfettered power. The lower clouds circled anxiously about the dragon's vast, pulsing abs, his thighs consuming whole mountain ranges, rivers, valleys, forests, lakes—everything. Mountain peaks that tapped the clouds hardly passed the midpoint of Bartok's surging rump as his salmon heels crashed through them, obliterating them into powder.

Figment's eyes darted back and forth, calculating frantically. Bartok had to be past 700 miles tall, at minimum, given the perceived width of his rear, which spanned roughly 80 miles in diameter—no, 100 miles!

"He isn't stopping," Cynder murmured, transfixed. "Can we really stop this?"

"RELEASE M-ME!" Ludmilla ordered, as she again burst bigger, splitting two more strips of metal from a failing cage. Even Baba Yaga began to pitch over, trying to hold it upright.

"What happens if *she* gets out?" Spyro correctly asked, being the first to consider it. "She was bigger than Bartok, even, and if she gets out, won't her size come right back?"

"No," Figment gasped, gulping dryly. "Worse...she's been hitting spurts over and over, and having them restrained, while inside of here...who knows how much suppressed growth is building up, inside of her? I...if she *ever* got free again..."

"Good grief," Cynder gasped, "she'd be even worse?"

"You must have some way to contain her, permanently," Figment pleaded, turning to the witch. "Bartok growing is already dangerous enough, we can't possibly let her out, too..."

Baba Yaga looked away, and shook her head dismally.

"Then, a cure, there must be an antidote!"

"It would need to be beyond powerful, to counteract this potion, is the problem," she muttered.

"But, you could make it? What if...what if I put more candies into the antidote?"

"Fight power with *more* power? No, dragon, absurd! It does not work that way!"

"Then, just do what you can! We can't discuss any further, time is ticking!"

That much was no surprise to anyone; what was a shock, however, was Figment undoing the bag, and digging for a handful of candies.

"What are you doing, Fig?" Cynder asked, as Toothless and Spyro both lit up behind her.

"Cynder, this one...is yours!"

He thrust out a candy swirling with black and red, and she took it cautiously.

"But..."

"We need more absorption! You and Spyro halt Bartok's growth! Take all that you can!"

Figment already saw Spyro grinning, and tossed his comrade a blue-gold candy, which he snatched up. He lobbed a green-gold one at Toothless, who shined his gums with a wiggling dance.

"What about you, Fig?" Cynder asked. "I thought we weren't—"

"Indeed, we weren't, but this is an extreme emergency; I'm taking one too, so the three of us will be absorbing as a team! Toothless, you take yours and guard this house, for all you're worth!"

Toothless nodded his understanding as everyone readied their candy.

"We'll tax as much size back out of us as possible, after this, but for now...oh, boy, we're about to explode in size! Just, well...be ready for the rush!"

Everyone swallowed their piece and gulped it down as Ludmilla shrank yet again, and carefully observed it all from her cage.

"Ready?" Figment asked, working the crew up. The other dragons nodded firmly, then leapt into the portal. Lastly, Figment turned back to Baba Yaga. "Please, make *as much* antidote as you can!"

"Yes, yes, go then, quickly!"

Figment managed a reassuring smile, then vanished, the portal closing after. No sooner than he did, Ludmilla stretched her long neck out from the newly-widened openings in the cage, and bit hard on the witch's arm. She howled and reflexively threw the cage and its contents away.

Said cage landed directly into the cauldron, still filled with the remainder of the potion.

Portal or door, the effect had proven the same: the withheld size roared back into all four dragons as they tumbled together onto a huge pile, out over the far mountains. Spyro landed first, then Toothless atop him, Cynder on his pectorals, with Figment bouncing onto Toothless' huge thighs.

The moment they hit the cold air, it began. There was no time for formalities as Spyro had already outgrown them all, his muscles forcing Toothless up, even as the black dragon's grew bigger and heavier, over him. Cynder's bust mashed against Figment's muzzle as he shook and blew up against her sides, as Toothless exploded larger, beneath them both. Wings mingled awkwardly, slipping, swelling and poking, pushed and moved by grasping hands as they grew and grew. Spyro blasted up so much bigger in scope that he *became* their landscape, all 500 miles eagerly returning to him.

The default confusion any dog-pile would have created only increased as the four reptiles ballooned uncontrollably in scope, unable to untangle.

The effects of the candies were immediate and severe as Cynder felt three growing bulges between three sets of legs, pressing and sliding hotly against her scales, making her blush, before she shrieked and erupted larger, heaving so big that her 15-mile body pressed them all at once. A set of monstrous breasts crushed down, ballooning teats hammering into Spyro's growing muscles. When Spyro grappled with one huge nipple, he naturally fed on her size, and began to blow up larger, only for Figment to grope and push at Spyro's newfound mass.

The bafflement worsened as Cynder slipped down to 4 miles, and Spyro boomed up to 550 miles, then 600, the candy's effects compounding with his absorption abilities. Cynder's growth resumed, unfazed, and she billowed up with a heavy cry to 50 miles, shuddering and moaning, then bursting up to 100 after. It was impossible to ascertain whether all of the gains were from the candy, her absorption, or a strange marriage of both, but she was nearing a fifth of Spyro's titanic size. Her huge thighs seated unintentionally against the bulk of Spyro's bloated sheath, as a massive set of scaly orbs ballooned up between his vast thighs.

Figment's legs parted rapidly, alarming the confounded dragon, as he felt his sheath push forward, now quite visible, a red-hot blush dappling his violet muzzle. He yelped and tried to hide it as he surged up to 90 miles, then 200, touching and feeding off of Spyro, who slipped only momentarily back down to 500 miles, Figment up to 150.

Toothless shoved off of the three of them, his huge feet slamming the paper-thin stretch of forests below; he huffed and flexed tight, feeling his muscles burst out twice as massive, twice as thick, around, bulging to an awesome absurdity. The candies did their job as he lidded his big green eyes, feeling his trapezius explode in size, his neck swelling twice as thick, his biceps booming into vast mounds, in time with his pulsating chest. He trembled and pumped higher, higher, swelling up past half a mile, then a full mile, his bulk exploding larger in waves of delight.

At 5 miles in height, Toothless flexed his thighs and calves to ludicrous size, dug in, and launched himself at Cynder, knocking her 150-mile body just hard enough to push her off of Figment and Spyro. She thudded to the ground with a great, shattering quake, then scooted her huge body back as she watched Figment feed and grow. Spyro slipped down to 400 miles as Figment matched his size, then surpassed it, only for Spyro to counter-feed, and blow up to 800 miles, as Figment slipped to 400, back and forth, back and forth.

"PUSH OFF, FIG!" Cynder shouted.

Figment managed to shove off and crash so powerfully to the ground that the 10-mile tall Toothless and the 150-mile tall Cynder both wobbled. They had landed just outside of the crater Ludmilla's growth spurt had created, and just beyond that...was Bartok. The 700-mile Spyro and the 700-mile Figment separated and moved away from each other, shaking the landscape with each blasting fall of city-sized palms and valley-sized toes. Both of them twitched with bulk, breathing heavily, then looking away to the horizon. Their mission remained clear, on sight of it.

Bartok sat, so massive and monstrous now that his rear alone *was* the country. One cheek rested at over 100 miles in width, his full rump over 200, all told. Big as they had just grown, both Spyro and

Figment would have needed to grab both cheeks at once, to even think of lifting Bartok off of the crumbling terrain. The bat-dragon loomed so large that even *they* had to look up to see the rest of him. Even with the clouds up to their lower legs, Spyro and Figment lost sight of the upper half of Bartok, who towered past the highest reaches of the atmosphere, at a magnificent 1,800 miles—nearly *ten million feet*.

Figment was studied enough to know that he could have hugged half the moon, and covered it. Moscow itself could have been rebuilt nearly sixty times in tandem, and still just barely reach up to Bartok's vast muzzle. Feet as big as entire islands loomed over the oceans as they grew further out, crashing through snowbound tundras (on other shores) and displacing entire lakes as they pushed carelessly bigger, wider and taller.

"WHOA," Spyro boomed, impressed. ***"I SHOULDN'T HAVE POKED FUN. HE'S...PRETTY AWESOME."***

"DON'T LET HIM HEAR YOU SAY SO," Figment chuckled, surprised at the sheer power his voice generated as it rumbled through his thick neck. ***"SHALL WE?"***

"OH, YEAH," Spyro growled, openly excited. ***"LET'S."***

"EVEN WITH ALL THREE OF US, THIS WILL TAKE SOME SERIOUS WORK, YOU TWO!" Cynder hollered below, recapturing their attention.

She was still hundreds of thousands of feet tall, standing as big as several cities, joined together; her feet could have bridged continents, her breasts so massive they could have flattened mountains—yet, compared to them, she was toddler-sized, as Toothless was toddler-sized, to her.

The supergiants turned back to her, nodding, and Cynder finally saw what she had been fairly sure she'd felt, earlier. Two massive sheaths whipped about as they turned, thumping back down on vast, oversized orbs, and she immediately looked away with a raw blush. So that was what another golden candy did. *Gracious*.

"I, UH, I HAVE AN IDEA...I'M THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO CAN ABSORB SIZE AND ELEMENTS...SO WHEN WE START ABSORBING, I WANT ALL OF YOU THREE TO HIT ME WITH ALL THE FIRE BLASTS YOU CAN. ALRIGHT?"

"DONE AND DONE," both Spyro and Figment bellowed, grinning wide. Toothless' mighty tail whipped approvingly as Cynder nodded thankfully at him, only to scope the immense equipment between Toothless' thick thighs. Her blush did not decrease.

"HAAA...NEVER BEEN...S-SO BIIIG..."

Bartok's voice cascaded down through his bulk, making the entire hemisphere into a doomsday tremor. His chest bulged out far beyond his pink-tipped muzzle as he grinned, low-eyed and drunk on power. He snorted and shut his pink eyes as the trembling returned, and the 2,000-mile tall behemoth gasped and blew up even larger, *still*.

***"Y'SEE ME N-NOW...RASPUTIN?
HEHE, OUTDID YA, THERE, DIDN'T I?"***

The god-dragon bit his lip and snarled happily, unable to help it, as he felt his horns swell even longer and heavier, crowning more of his sail-ears and their pink insides. Hands as big as entire countries explored his body, squeezing tight on pectorals so massive that even he couldn't believe they fit on him. His shoulders rolled, waves of thick, snowy fur bristling beautifully across stretching, scaled muscles. He brought up both massive arms, thrilled with how hard it was to lift their weight, and made sure to get both biceps right up against his cheeks and jawline, just so he could feel them boom against his head as he flexed again, and again, feeling them swell larger and larger each time.

***"YEAH, HEH! THAT'S THE WAY,
I TELL YA! T'THINK, DIS IS WHAT
WAS IN ME, ALL ALONG!"***

Bartok was understandably lost in himself. Having gone from a pipsqueak bat to a dragon so big he was sitting atop Russia was a difficult scenario to distance his right mind from, entirely. Why not embrace it?

He opened both lake-sized eyes, and even he was in awe. The curve of the world was his to see, and his alone. *The entire planet*. At 3,000 miles, nearly sixteen million feet, Bartok was beyond enormous. Beyond powerful. Beyond everything. Beyond lovely. He was the size of *the moon!*

As he opened his gargantuan mouth to boast more, Bartok felt it. Everything, the power, the rushing growth, it...slowed. Then stopped, outright. His ears perked out ahead of him before he blinked, then looked himself over again. Then, instead of merely loitering within, that sweet power withdrew, and he felt himself lurch smaller with one sickly slip, then another, and another.

"WHOA, HEY, NOW, THE HECK?"

Yet again Bartok hiccuped lower, dwindling down to 2,500 miles...2,400 miles...2,200 miles...he looked around the obscuring clouds swirling across the globe beneath him. Being that big, no one was around to explain as he shook and slipped down again, lowering to 2,000 miles, until the cause grew large enough that the giga-sized giant could see.

Spyro, Figment and Cynder, those dragons from before—they were all touching on him. Spyro and Figment grew at the same time that he dwindled down to 1,800 miles, and the two males both blew

up to 900, each. They were taking their share, sure...but the prime taker was the female!

Every few seconds both Spyro and Figment would turn their heads on massive, bulky necks, and blow fire onto Cynder, who remained between them, hugging Bartok's lower belly. She seemed to be quickly outpacing them as she bulged to 1,100 miles, versus Bartok's 1,600! Of course, he was sitting, and they weren't, but it was painfully clear that they were catching up with alarming speed.

"OH! AH, HEY, YOU GUYS! EH, LOOKS L-LIKE YOU GOT THIS UNDER...CONTROL, DON'CHA? HEY THANKS A SUPER-BUNCH, I...I'M GOOD NOW, THAT'LL DO 'ER!"

Still, they all took, and Bartok gulped as he deflated down again, sinking grudgingly to 1,500 miles. The temptation to brush them all off was suddenly unbearable.

"DON'T WORRY, B, WE'VE GOT YOU," Cynder called, as Spyro and Figment blew fire into her sides again, making her tremble and explode even bigger. Her huge breasts dragged up along the bat-dragon's stomach, making Bartok blush at the realization, just as she stood up to his 1,300-mile size (with him still sitting).

"OH, YEAH, Y...YOU SURE DO, THERE...WELL, I-I'M ALL GOOD, THEN, YOU CAN ALL LET GO..."

"NO WAY, PAL," Spyro called, growing along with Figment to an even 1,100 miles each, as Toothless kept the comparatively tiny house in his hands. ***"THERE'S NO WAY THAT LEVEL OF POWER DIDN'T WIND YOU UP. TRUST ME, I KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT!"***

Bartok watched as they reached his size, then finally let go of him. The party stood over the world itself, able to see across entire continents, clouds playing about their massive, state-spanning toes and immense, curving claws. Even the tips of each could have outsized a city. Despite the calls for calm and order, all five dragons were stealing glances of the world beneath them, clearly in awe.

"WE'RE NOT HERE TO KILL THE FUN, BARTOK," Cynder soothed, the huge dragoness' bosom mashing into the white dragon's huge, furred chest. ***"IT'S JUST FOR THE BEST TO GET THINGS UNDER CONTROL."***

"YEAH, I GUESS," Bartok sighed, nodding. ***"BUT BOY, YOU WEREN'T KIDDING, THERE, SPYRO, IT WAS JUST...AH, IT WAS..."***

"THE BEST," Spyro and Figment finished, grinning.

"GRANTED," Cynder agreed, ruffling Bartok's lovely head fur comfortingly. ***"WHO WOULDN'T GET TAKEN WITH THAT MUCH POWER AND SIZE? COME ON,"***

LET'S GET YOU BACK INTO BABA YAGA'S HOUSE. SHE'S WHIPPING UP A CURE FOR ALL OF US, INCLUDING THAT NASTY PIECE OF WORK--"

"L-LUDMILLA!" Bartok gasped, finally remembering. ***"AH, GEEZ, SHE TOOK THE POTION THAT I HAD, WHEN I FOUND OUT SHE KIDNAPPED PRINCE IVAN! HECK, THE ONLY REASON I GOT FREE FROM HER PRISON WAS ON ACCOUNT OF I STOLE AN...AN EXTRA BIT OF POTION, SEE..."***

"WE KNOW," Spyro said. ***"WELL, BABA'S GOT HER CAGED, TEMPORARILY. OUR SMARTY FIG HERE WAS ABLE TO TRAP HER IN THE WITCH'S HOUSE. SO, THIS ALL WORKED OUT. YOU KNOW, THOSE CANDIES REALLY UPPED OUR ABSORPTION GAME! I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WAY HARDER TO GET THIS DONE. WHAT DO YOU GUYS SAY? SHOULD WE GET BACK, BEFORE BARTOK GETS TO GROWING EVEN BIGGER, AGAIN?"***

The moment they all nodded (even Bartok, hesitantly), Toothless growled, pulling their attention down to him. The house, being microscopic compared to him, was less than a mote upon one scale on his colossal palm—but he offered it up, just the same, proud to have done his duty.

"RIGHT, THEN, HERE WE GO," Figment thundered, the towering dragon slapping his mitts together, his vast biceps surging with the motion. He closed his eyes and lowered his muzzle in preparation, and the moment the portal opened, the instant it flared up to their staggering size, floating over the globe—all hell broke loose.

A great ocean of pink blimped out through the other side, suddenly there, then suddenly blasting further out, like a high-pressure hose. One mammoth-sized breast popped free, a dark, towering nipple pushing out over the planet; the other breast followed after, before a mounding bulge behind it popped free as a monstrous, scaly arm. A continent-sized hand crashed down into the ocean, displacing waves onto the map-like landscapes.

A huge muzzle pushed out, nostrils flaring, then surged up into space as a long, thick neck wormed free of the portal's stretching rim. The accompanying shadow spilled over the hemisphere, over even the mighty quintet of dragons, as Ludmilla's scaled belly ballooned bigger and bigger, its width booming further out as more of it got loose. Both massive hands gripped the Earth—the very planet—and she pulled herself out, growling and snarling, all teeth and wrath.

"F-FUH-FIG," Spyro stammered, scooting his immense musculature back in time with Cynder, as Figment kept focusing. ***"FIG, BUDDY, S-STOP! STOP!"***

"I'VE ALMOST GOT IT," Figment assured, only to cry out as Ludmilla's looming belly and legs slammed into the planet, smothering its curves with rosé muscle and girth. Her tail whipped as the portal closed, Figment's concentration thrown by the impact of a 5,000-mile tall female leviathan.

Bartok was already on the move. Feet the size of peninsulas *slam-slam-slammed*, shaking the

neighboring civilizations of the world into a panic as he fled to the other hemisphere. To be fair, there was nowhere else to really go.

"OUT...OF...M-MY...WAY!"

Ludmilla boomed, rattling the world below, as sound waves too big to comprehend coursed out. Even the other dragons had to get through the raw bass of her rumbling, to understand the demand beneath.

"SCATTER!"

Someone had surely said it, but as Ludmilla's massive claws sailed over the atmosphere, the entire group had already begun doing just that. For all their collective muscle, Spyro, Toothless, Cynder and Figment all moved with *adequate* agility, narrowly moving their mass enough to not be obliterated as her hand swiped across the world. A death-wind of displaced atmosphere followed, howling, as every civilization on the hemisphere shuddered, trees uprooting, clouds vaporizing, oceans stirring.

Spyro was back up on his massive feet first, retorting with a streaming blast of fire. The column smashed into Ludmilla's bosom, making the dragoness hiss and twist about destructively, putting a tremendous pink bicep between herself and the attack. Her elbow now extended, Ludmilla merely had to push it forward, smashing into Spyro. Being nearly five times bigger, she sent him flying back over the ocean, colliding with the trenches, which only deepened under his arriving weight. Waves that could embarrass the greatest tsunami spat up into space as he rolled back, roaring miserably through the waters of the planet itself.

***"ANNOYANCES...E-
EVERY...WHERE I TURN..."***

Her hand rose up into the stars, balled into a fist, then rocketed down to the firmament, right over Cynder. Toothless and Figment both managed to reach her, Toothless shoving her bigger bulk away, just as Figment brought both powerful arms up and caught Ludmilla's fist. The impact slammed in after, and Figment sank lower with a startled yelp, though he held her fist up long enough for Toothless to leap onto her arm; he scaled it with astonishing speed, unleashing a volley of bright fireballs that peppered her breast, neck and jawline with miniature explosions.

Cynder brushed off her landing, spread her massive feet over the ocean in an attack stance, and welled up. Her dark muscles bulged out as she blew out a wave of shadow-flame, which impacted up hard under Ludmilla's chin, effectively punching her in her throat.

The ultra-massive beast staggered back heavily over a quaking planet, shaking her head, her vast muzzle a field of wrinkles and rage. As she opened her maw, and as a terrible furnace glowed to life within it Toothless roared down from where he was, hugging her bust, and Figment saw.

"TOOTHLESS!" he shouted, motioning. **"ALLEY-OOP!"**

Maybe Toothless knew what that meant, maybe he didn't. Figment had snuck into enough circus acts with Blair to know, so he knew the body language. It proved enough as Toothless wriggled, tensed, then vaulted down off of Ludmilla, small enough to easily land on Figment's opened palms. Figment grinned, then flexed hard, putting all that violet muscle to work as he launched Toothless so high up that the dragon evened out with Ludmilla's muzzle in mere moments.

The timing worked: by the time the huge dragoness finished rearing back to attack, Toothless blasted several fireballs directly into her mouth, igniting the fire within. Ludmilla's bellow was pure shock, then absolute fury, as the ensuing explosion hammered her throat and overfilled her mouth, throwing her head back with a vast cloud of smoke.

Toothless was caught in a thankful hug by Figment as he landed, Toothless hugging him back with an over-enthused squeeze.

"KEEP ON HER, CYNDER!" Spyro roared, thundering past her. **"WHEN I MAKE AN OPENING, YOU FEED ON HER, TOO! FIG!"**

"RIGHT!" Figment boomed, setting Toothless down, then charging to one side of Ludmilla's looming form, flanking right as Spyro banked left.

Cynder took just enough time to get her breath back then blasted out another, bigger streak of flame, slamming into the incensed Ludmilla, to the point where even the larger dragoness started to inch back across the planet's surface. From out the smoke, her gigantic head emerged, pockmarked with singes and soot. It was no longer a matter of teeth: Ludmilla had grown so enraged, so utterly furious, that she was all gums.

"YOU...WRETCHES! I..."

A violent shudder tore through Ludmilla, interrupting, making her huff and tremble all over. She tried again to speak, but the trembling only grew more and more terrible, more powerful and deep. The other dragons all reared back, jaws slack, eyes bulging.

"OH, NO, NO," Cynder wheezed, as Spyro planted his hands onto Ludmilla's vast side, Figment doing the same on the other. **"SHE...SHE ISN'T DONE GROWING! HOLD ON, GUYS, I'M COMING TO HELP--"**

Before she got one huge foot ahead of her, Cynder was slammed with a sheer wall of scaly growth. She was shoved back as Ludmilla grew with such ugly, frightening force that she nearly blacked out from the speed of it, as Ludmilla *exploded* in size. Even as the eruption came, the rumbling continued; in fact, it was escalating frantically.

Ludmilla's immense hands clutched the Earth, only to bulge so big that they each covered a side of the whole, crushing into both oceans at once. Whole islands barely compared to one single,

groaning scale. Her belly and haunches slipped away, growing feet kicking about space as the planet vanished under her ballooning breasts. 5,000 miles blew clear up to 12,000 miles, the stretching scales and raging body heat flooding the beshadowed world below. Her muzzle opened into a pained roar as Ludmilla blew up even bigger, her hide pulling intensely tight as she screamed and surged to 20,000 miles, in one hard gush of expansion.

The tiny moon met her swelling neck, bumping off its course as Ludmilla's bust poured out over Earth, fully consuming it, more and more of the dwindling globe shoving tight between her massive breasts. At 30,000 miles, she finally stopped, huffing out a thick burst of steam and magic glitter, shaking with unbridled power and lust.

Spyro, Figment and Cynder all desperately held onto her sides and arm; all of them had been absorbing energy, and still were—but even then, Ludmilla's size hardly lowered down, at all. The three dragons were exploding in size, yet they remained mere ticks in comparison.

Spyro's teeth grit as he trembled and inflated up to 2,000 miles, then 2,500, seconds later, having to take size in awkward, lurching gulps of growth. Figment billowed up to 2,200 miles, Cynder a whopping 4,000...yet, as Ludmilla growled and shook even worse, blowing up to a terrifying 40,000 miles, their gains seemed more laughable, yet.

***"WHY...BOTHER...WITH
THE WORLD..."*** Ludmilla huffed, licking her muzzle over as she trembled on and on, rapidly adjusting to the overflowing explosion of power within herself.

***"WHEN I COULD AIM...B-
BIIIIIGGGER!?"***

"SHE'S LOSING IT!" Spyro moaned, blowing up to 4,000 miles in size. ***"I'VE NEVER BEEN T-THIS....POWER-MAD...SHE'S REALLY T-TAKING THE CAKE, HERE!"***

"J-JUST...KEEP AT IT..." Cynder roared, from over on Ludmilla's massive forearm, having surged up to 5,000 miles, every bit as big as Ludmilla had been, just a minute ago. ***"I'LL TRY AND DO SOMETHING ELSE..."***

Cynder blasted a torrent of even-darker fire, battering Ludmilla's muzzle, just big and strong enough to make the titanic dragoness roar and shake her head in anger. She locked eyes with a defiant Cynder, who welled up for another attack—only for Ludmilla to blast her with a far huger burst of fire.

Figment and Spyro hung on as Ludmilla's vast body floated in space, entire asteroid belts and tiny moons steadily drifting into her expanding gravity well. As they both fed their way up to 6,000 miles, the flames soaked into Cynder, and within seconds she erupted larger, swelling with bulk and curves alike to over 12,000 miles, then 18,000!

"GO, CYNDER! GO!"

Both Figment and Spyro cheered as Cynder reached out and openly throttled Ludmilla's thick neck with both arms. At 20,000 miles in size, she was only a third of Ludmilla's—but it was bearing fruit as, at last, the growing villain shook, then started to steadily creep smaller in size. Cynder took in more and more, her chest swelling and rubbing and dragging against her opponent's, bust pressing to bust as she burst up to 26,000 miles, versus Ludmilla's 50,000.

"FIG!" Cynder bellowed, shaking them all from the force of her utterances.

"SHE'S...SHRINKING DOWN...DO YOUR T-THING!"

With the unfathomable amount of power Figment was absorbing, the 7,000-mile dragon felt more than confident to the task. He was practically the size of the Earth, of course he could manage a big enough portal—or portals, dare he imagine!

As he focused, an incredibly vast portal began to yawn wide, out in space, growing wider and wider still. Another portal appeared, right where Ludmilla's tail was growing, and in seconds it swallowed the tip, then its midsection, and as she grew back towards 60,000 miles she was again drained smaller.

"LET...GOOOO!"

Ludmilla bellowed, thrashing her massive bulk, putting every oversized pink muscle to work, forcing Spyro and Figment to cling tighter, and absorb even more into their stretching selves.

***"...I WAS MEANT...TO RULE! I
WILL NOT BE HELD BACK...BY YOU
PEONS! I...CRUSH YOU TO
POWDER!"***

Her massive fist raised again, and she pummeled Cynder dead-on. Even being nearly 30,000 miles tall, big enough to hold the Earth like a ball, Cynder went flying. Her grip lost, she spiraled back through space—only for another portal to flash open and catch her, sending her behind Ludmilla, and Cynder gladly bashed the bigger dragon back.

Staying behind, Cynder found it easy to bear-hug Ludmilla's backside, clasping tight. No fists

of any size could reach her now, and Ludmilla sourly resumed shrinking as Spyro, Cynder and Figment continued to sap her size down to 40,000 miles.

Ludmilla whipped her tail about, snapping Cynder's bulky sides like a spiked whip. Cynder groaned, but dug deep and kept her grip, despite the pain. Knowing she couldn't take the abuse forever, Figment bit his lip, thought, then simply bit Ludmilla, instead. His teeth got far enough, as he heard a blood curdling screech of hate booming up above. Ludmilla's maw opened, and a white-hot storm of fire roared down towards him.

"ACK!" Figment hollered, opening up a portal, last-second. The fire found it, instead of at him, and with a grunt of focus Figment opened another portal behind Cynder, so that the fires exited out and blasted her even *bigger*.

Cynder shook and rumbled with sudden delight, the pain replaced with pleasure, as both males watched her blast up even larger, swelling clear up over Ludmilla, her breasts smothering over her rival's head with startling speed as she ballooned up to 70,000 miles. Both massive arms hugged around Ludmilla, holding her back tight, the 30,000-mile dragoness now completely caught in Cynder's muscled grasp. A cataclysmically huge voice boomed:

***"FIGMENT, YOU'RE
BEAUTIFUL! I'VE GOT
HER, GET CLEAR! AND
KEEP GROWING THE
PORTAL!"***

Spyro was already drifting off, his 10,000-mile body pure muscle and girth, his smile wide. He stared far up at Cynder, in rapt attention, as a 9,000-mile tall Figment joined him.

"WOULD YOU JUST LOOK AT HER, FIG," Spyro sighed, beaming.
"WHAT A WOMAN!"

"WE AREN'T DONE, JUST YET," Figment replied, concentrating harder. The portal swelled up with a roar of energy, creeping up to 30,000 miles in diameter, then 40,000.
"ALRIGHT! ALMOST... ENOUGH..."

Unfortunately, that was when Ludmilla began to rumble, once more.

This time, however, the rumble was so deep, so awful, that space itself began to shudder, the surrounding planets trying to flee in fear. The globes were only so much larger than the dragons, yet still began to wobble ominously as Ludmilla's pink skin darkened into a muddier, nastier shade. Her horns lengthened out, her entire body pulsating as she snarled and roared, her speech leaving her faculties as raw, demonic rage bubbled forth.

"FIG, QUICK!"

Cynder's huge voice was cut short as Ludmilla grew with all the might of a mad god.

The terrible dragoness' 30,000-mile tall body bulged out, doubling in size in one horrible thunderclap of growth. Cynder stayed the larger dragon for only a beat as Ludmilla bellowed horribly and billowed and swelled, doubling in size again. 120,000 miles, over six-hundred million feet of muscle blew up in front of Cynder, forcing her mighty arms further, and further, and further apart.

Just like that, the portal was woefully inadequate. Still, Figment pushed, forcing it to stretch out to 90,000 miles, bigger than entire planets, trying desperately to outpace Ludmilla.

Spyro was already back on the villain, his hands, feet, toes and entire front pressing tight to her breasts, drawing in all that he could to help. Ludmilla dwindled for one moment of relief, slipping down to 100,000 miles, only to laugh a terrible boom of a laugh as she exploded even larger, effortlessly, doubling her size *again*. Whatever humanity she had was subsumed, lost to rage, the rage now lost to a giddy, absolute insanity.

Cynder screamed from the effort of trying to hold onto that much back muscle, her claws dragging away as Ludmilla outclassed her by greater and greater degrees.

Figment concentrated even harder, forcing multiple portals to pop up and consume Ludmilla's feet, her hands, her horns, all of them taxing size out of her—yet, astonishingly, Ludmilla simply snorted and shook all over and blew up again, doubling in size once more, booming uncontrollably to 400,000 miles in size!

Her eyes alone were bigger than the entirety of Earth, the sun only twice her size, as smaller planets, moons, planetoids and asteroids all swirled obediently about her growing muscles and hips. Biceps big enough to house multiple worlds swelled even bigger, tighter, overflowing with power as Ludmilla cackled and rumbled, magic smoke geysering from her muzzle. Her eyes flared bright as she trembled, moaned, then doubled in size *again*, inflating up to 800,000 miles!

Even with everything taxing her size, she was growing. Even with everything thrown at her, Ludmilla was expanding bigger, *faster*. *There had to be an end to it, there had to!*

Figment's limits had grown so very much, so fast, and yet he was finding them back again. His vision blurred as he stubbornly forced more portals open, trying to drain Ludmilla's vast toes, her

fingers, anything he could manage to get hold of...but it wasn't enough.

A 50,000-mile tall Spyro fed as best he could, but even his limits were showing as he panted and wobbled, starting to slip off of Ludmilla's chest. Cynder clawed at the tera-giant's back, but nothing was stopping her now. All their efforts merely slowed her, somewhat.

In a last-ditch move, Figment forced every portal to move, merging them all with the master portal, increasing its size. It pushed North of 300,000 miles, an absurd measurement by all previous metrics, a size that would have blown Figment's mind, but as Ludmilla cackled mindlessly and shook all the worse, all seemed well-and-truly lost.

Naturally, this made it all the more surprising when Ludmilla not only stopped laughing, out of nowhere, but also finally stopped her growth. The tremendous rumble died off, leaving the behemoth floating in space, confused. Her bestial nature maintained, all Ludmilla could manage was a baffled grunt as she looked herself over...then slipped smaller. Then, smaller, still. Further and further she shrank, her confusion returning to anger, as she trembled and lurched down to 500,000 miles, then 400,000 after that.

Before Figment could fully shake his tiredness off, he heard it:

"Portal! Inside Ludmilla! Back to here! Now!"

"WHAT," Figment coughed, looking around in shock. The voice was unfamiliar, tiny, barely even perceptible at his vast size.

"Portal inside her! Lead back here! Quick, Figment!"

The instructions were clear, yet insane: open a portal, *inside* of her?

Figment breathed hard, already ragged, before giving in and trusting the voice. He focused on Ludmilla, watching her roar and thrash as she shrank down to 300,000 miles. Spyro seemed unable to pull much more size, so overwhelmed by the power he had absorbed, leaving him a stunning 60,000-miles to her still-bigger self. He finally relented, floating away, eyes rolled back in an odd confluence of absolute pleasure and defeat.

Still, Figment focused, imagining harder, until he felt it happen.

A look of extreme discomfort hit Ludmilla as she growled and shook, before another portal nearer to Figment opened; nothing seemed to visibly pass through, until a familiar suction caught, pulling and pulling—an irresistible force, even out in space.

THUMP

The door slammed shut, and for a third time there they all were, safely inside of the same living room. Granted, things were in severe disarray, this time, indicative of a thorough struggle.

"Oh, good grief," Spyro huffed, rubbing his head. He was once more about the size of a child, as were the other dragons. "A little warning would be great, next time!"

"What happened?" Cynder gasped, looking around in a fugue. "We...we can't be back...how'd that happen, way out here? We were in the cosmos!"

"Ah, yeah, I took care of all dat, there," Bartok smugly replied, coming up from behind the both of them. Though he'd been reduced in the same manner, he was still as full of bulk and girth as the others—and he wore it well. "Baba Yaga, she filled me in on things, an' we hatched us a pretty nice master plan, I tell you."

"Bartok!" Figment gasped, still wobbling in place, before he went over to hug the dragon-bat. Bartok faltered, blushing, before tacitly half-hugging back. "Haha, I bet I know...w-what happened...you...you got hold of the antidote!"

"Well, s'a little bit more dan that, actually," he laughed, still blushing, as the others crowded around. "Yeah, see, I maybe beat a bit of a retreat, at first, sure...but yer buddy there, he chased me down, an' he had Baba's house with him...so, the door opens, since it was free by then—sorry fer sittin' on ya, by the by—well, Baba gave me the finished antidote, to take to Ludmilla...only when I left with Toothless, boy, y'all had grown so huge, I couldn't even...I was like a little speck! So, I figured I had to get the antidote to Ludmilla, myself, while you guys kept her all tied up-like and busy..."

"Then, you took the antidote in one hand, since you got your size back after leaving...and you flew it all the way up through space, and tossed it into Ludmilla's mouth," Figment guessed.

"Ah, well, I tried to...but she was thrashin' all around, real bad, an' I couldn't make the shot...so I uh, I flew right into her mouth, to make sure it went in. Only, she snapped me up with it. Real nasty business, I won't go into it. Was stuck but good."

"But...you *talked* to me," Figment said, having to lean into Cynder, who absorbed off of him on contact and swelled up a bit bigger; she helped sit Figment down on the floor, rather than feed further.

"Eh? Dat wasn't me, Figment, I dunno what yer talkin' about there," Bartok huffed, cocking his draconic head. "I made right fer Ludmilla, since she was gettin' too big, too fast."

"Heh, that was me, actually!"

Everyone turned to face Toothless, who beamed wide, his thick tail beating the floor. No one spoke, from the surreality of the moment. He nodded and folded his thick, bulky arms over his chest.

"Well, it *was*," he continued, shrugging. "I saw Bartok doing something selfless, and figured I had best tell Figment to get him back out. Didn't seem right, leaving him. Besides, I had Baba's house with me, so the moment he got free, I could let her door open, and we'd all get back safe inside. We would have opened the door right at the start, but the antidote wasn't done with, yet."

"Huh," Figment mumbled, thinking. "I can believe you swallowed the seed earlier...but really? Bartok was willing to sacrifice himself?"

"Yeah, don't be so shocked, there," Bartok snarked, embarrassed. "I mostly just wanted to get back at that pompous Regent—she fell into the remaining potion, after you all left, hence her getting so all-fired super-colossal, there! And yeah, yanno, there was more than just revenge, I did swear I'd

save...Ivan! Oh shoot, the prince! All this time, I don't...where was he?"

"Back safely on Earth, as we all are now," Baba said, the sly old crone suddenly there, in the living room. She held a glass orb in one hand, within which Ludmilla was now trapped. She stood only the size of a small toy or doll, snarling and bashing herself against its insides, uselessly. "With a bit of time, I found a suitable cage for this one. You can close your portals, Figment."

"Consider it done," he wheezed, exhausted. "Well, then...go, team dragon, eh?"

Spyro was the first to chime in:

"Heck, yeah, team dragon wins! Heh! That was a serious rush!"

"You were passing out from overload, yourself," Cynder said, nudging him gently.

"Best practice I ever had. I've never been big enough to hold entire planets!"

"Eh, it was nice, bein' the biggest fer a short bit, there," Bartok admitted, grinning.

"Trust me, buddy, if you hang around us long enough, you'll get *way* bigger," Spyro offered.

"Really!"

"Hehe, yeah! See? You're a *real* dragon, now! Look how excited you got!"

"Alright, alright, you lot," Baba Yaga sighed, waving her free hand. "Enough chatter! The world has been through a tremendous shock! It will take some time to rebuild what you all flattened."

"Oh, good Lord," Cynder said, finally stopping to think on it. "The people!"

"Oh no, no, don't worry about them," Figment said, thumping onto his back, upon the floor. "They're all fine, I promise. No one was harmed, I saw to it earlier..."

Cynder and Spyro looked to each other, while Toothless nodded knowingly.

"Yup," the black dragon said, completely confident. "I saw it while you were all battling. As I chased down Bartok, I noticed it. Sections of the world were sliding back into place, and rebuilding on their own. I bet if he wasn't doing that *and* making portals, Figment would have really clobbered her."

Figment laughed, wagging faster, still flat on the floor.

"Oh, let's not go that far," he murmured. "It was really...quite difficult."

"What?" Baba Yaga said, slowly. Even she went silent, before stepping back in fear and awe. "You...fixed it? All of...the entire world?"

"Well, the top half. I kept imagining things were fine down here, as we fought," Figment chirped. "It was on my mind so much, while all the devastation was going on...I kept thinking, *everyone was alright*, just...disrupted and jostled about, some, at the most. Unhappy, but safe."

"That level of power," the old witch muttered, lost in thought. "That would make you...*much...stronger* than...I ever imagined..."

"Thanks," Figment chuckled, sincerely flattered. "I do try."

"You've grown into a pretty amazing being, Fig, don't be modest," Cynder added.

"Long as you're on our side, it's all good," Spyro further added, getting a poke to massively thick ribs by Cynder.

"So, then, all's well again, and fixed, yeah?" Bartok asked. "I mean, the world is safe and all that, Ludmilla...well, she's still a dragon, an' so am I...but otherwise, we're good, yeah?"

Bartok headed for the door, casually, satisfied with things.

"Well, not entirely," Figment said, stopping him. "Bartok, did you take any antidote, yourself?"

"Well, no, gosh...I was kinda focused on getting it all to Ludmilla..."

"Were you still growing, after you left with the antidote?"

"Yeah..."

"Then, the moment you leave here...you may keep getting bigger. That potion is unbelievably powerful. You could outgrow us all in short order, unless you get a dose of antidote, yourself."

"Oh, no, not *dat*," Bartok said. "I don't mind. Plus I was kinda hopin' we were done talking..."

"Worry not, I'll see to the cure," Baba Yaga replied, setting Ludmilla's crystal cage down on a dresser shelf. "Also, I don't want this *anywhere* near me, or this Ludmilla character, so you take it..."

Figment looked up, propping on his elbows, as Baba Yaga handed him a large, brilliantly colorful ball. A candy.

"Wait. Is this..."

"Yes, yes. A small sliver of potion remained, after that cursed dragoness fell into the pot and consumed most of it. It cooled and hardened, and I don't want anything this devastatingly powerful around. Take the blasted thing with you. I tried to break it on my own, and failed. An immense energy made all attempts to destroy it impossible, without being eaten, so you might as well look after it."

"Amazing," Figment muttered, looking it over. "A new candy?"

"I'll try it," Toothless said, stepping in ahead of Spyro, whose mouth was already opening to say the same thing. "I tried the seed, I might as well broaden my horizons!"

"Or broaden, to horizon-size," Spyro muttered.

"I'll hold onto it, just the same. Though you do sound great, by the way, I like the voice," Figment said, putting the candy away in his bag. "It quite suits you!"

Toothless nearly swelled larger, from the praise.

"So, feel free to rest here, while I create the antidote," Baba Yaga interjected. "But after that, you should depart. You've done much to help, yet any fool can see that a certain chaos follows you closely, a chaos I do not wish any prolonged proximity to."

"Yes, ma'am," Figment agreed, before letting himself thud back to the floor. "I think I can manage a portal inside of here, just fine. We should go, anyhow, once you explain how to break from the path we're on..."

"Of course, yes," she backpedaled, nodding quickly. "I did agree. Then, as I create the potion, I will say, so listen well. The path you are set upon is intricate and invisible, a force. The will binding you to it is impossibly strong. Your only means to detach from it is to open a *counter*-portal."

Figment thought on it, furrowing his brow.

"A counter...portal? As in, backwards? How would going back...wouldn't we just wind up in the previous world?"

"Not quite. The line you are on is a stream, not a landscape, which is static. Returning backwards to a spot on land will get you somewhere you've been, but not with water. The water you would return to wouldn't be the water you were in, earlier, that's moved on. Each world is a drop of water, in one current. That current reflects what this greater intelligence wishes. If you move out of that current, into a world not on its path, you would effectively be moving on your own, free of that will."

Figment's mind boggled.

"How would I know where to leap, then? Rather...how do I open a counter-portal?"

"You would have to reverse a portal, its flow."

"Well...hmm."

Bartok fidgeted some, as Figment was given the time to sit up and process things.

"Imagining...backwards? Or would it be like turning the hands of a clock, maybe?"

"Give yourself time to practice, if need be," Baba Yaga offered, somewhat grudgingly. "Just, don't take up too much of *mine*, to do it."

"Sorry, I know we're trouble," Figment soothed. "I...I think I know what to do, one moment!"

Even Ludmilla had calmed down, only able to stare daggers through her unbreakable prison, watching on with the others as Figment closed his eyes.

"I need to move the portal differently with enough power to break from the current's momentum

in space and time," Figment mumbled, concentrating. "That's what Blair would say, I think..."

Toothless made a confused face.

"We'll explain later," Cynder whispered to him, as the entirety of the living room dropped darker, and darker, making her brows knit low, in rising concern. "Er, Fig..."

"I've almost got it," Figment replied, as a spark snapped through the air, near the ceiling. "My mind is my hand...and that hand...is dipping into the stream, stirring against it..."

The portal flickered angrily to life, overhead, glowing bright red, instead of blue.

"That...looks like a mean portal, Fig," Spyro muttered, trying to sound nonchalant.

"It's just the opposite color, on the spectrum, it's alright," Figment explained, as the portal expanded abruptly, pushing out through the very walls, as if partially exiting them as it grew. "I just need to give it enough power to—"

A thunder-crack burst as the portal twitched on its own accord, then lurched down, falling lower. Before anyone could even shout, the entire house drew inward, dimensional space pinching into its center, then vanishing into it completely.

The solitary portal shuddered, flickered, then vanished, as well, leaving only the cold reaches of the motherland's mountains and sweeping forests below. Winds tumbled and brushed the snow along an undisturbed, mended world, leaving no trace of the dragons that had partially destroyed, then saved it.

10.

Even in space, surreal as it had all been, there had been light. The stars and the Sun cast across the void, a glowing panoply, an ocean of cosmic coloration blooming into different hues. It had been frightening to see, but also beautiful and commanding. Majestic, even.

This, though...this was just *dark*.

Figment waited, and waited, figuring sooner or later his eyes would have to adjust, only the time never came. Maybe they were waiting on him. Whatever world he had entered into, it didn't seem hospitable in the slightest; worse, still, it didn't seem *anything at all*.

"Ah," he started, the dragon's swollen bulk shifting a few blind degrees. "Huh-hello? Spyro? Cynder? Toothless, are you...Bartok? Anyone? Heh."

The darkness answered with silence. Out went Figment's huge arms.

"Ahem."

With nothing better to say, he tested the waters with his throat, and again, no results. Figment's thought processes whined away nervously, a shrill note sustained, as he felt for any sign of anything. The alternating between desperately wanting to feel something and the terror of actually feeling

something wore on him quickly, and he switched mental gears:

"The uh, the absence of light...suggests a cavern system, only I'm not echoing...there's no running water, or any wind currents...so...where else would be this dark? An empty room? Anyone? Any takers?"

With his hands finding nothing but black air, Figment sent the order to the backup team, and his feet grudgingly moved forward. In seconds, they bumped into a cylindrical mass (it had to have been, given how his foot slipped one way along a smooth surface), and a jolt of pain stuffed itself into what was already a fairly unhappy dragon.

"Gah, bother!"

A moment's relief snuck in, through the irritation. *This was not an empty room.*

"Alright, then, okay..." he muttered, leaning in, his paws brushing the edge of something, atop the cylinder. They swept up, then back down, eventually grazing a flat, wide surface. *A table? Then, this was a room...but, a room in where?*

Light snapped on, overhead, making the unprepared Figment wince and thrash backwards.

"Ah!"

His thick back muscles bumped into something. Figment's eyes fluttered angrily open as he adjusted, seeing a counter of sorts. It stretched out, hugging a curving wall; when Figment turned to follow its curvature, he finally understood. It was a room, a circle, like the inside of a large, sleek sphere. No cabins, no woodlands, no rustic charm. This was cool and sleek, and for a moment, flashes of the futuristic world they had passed by before returned. The pain and confusion melted into a sudden well of excitement, as Figment's scientifically-trained mind leapt on it.

"Well!" he gasped, rubbing one eye at a time, so he could still keep looking about. "Metallic walls! No...oh, no, some sort of...alloy? Surely, some synthetic...plastic? This much of it!? Gracious!"

He cast out a hand, and let it brush out over the wall, grinning widely.

"It must be! But to manufacture such quantities...and there are no structural flaws! My, my! I imagine they don't even have such materials in Spyro's..."

His eyes widened, and he spun about.

"Spyro!"

The room was his, and his alone. Entirely *alone*. The counter wrapped all the way around what was indeed a large, circular table, interrupted only by what appeared to be some high-tech ice box or refrigerator. On the other side of the table, the counter framed a large, crescent-style padded seat, like a booth. There were no windows—and no doors. Cold fear overtook Figment's enthusiasm, and stayed.

"Oh, no," he murmured, biting his reptilian lip. "Oh, no, no. Cynder, Tooth...where is everyone? We've ended up a modest distance apart, geographically, certainly, but...an entirely separate place?"

He rushed over to a section of the wall, which was easy to do (the room was hardly more than a bedroom in size, after all), and rapped on it with his knuckles. The echo was hollow.

"Thin walls," he whispered to himself, before knocking again, harder. "Hello! Anyone!"

No answer. He had hoped for cellmates, if a prison he was in. Still:

"Spyro! Cynder! Anyone, next door?"

Nothing. Figment's enormous thigh muscles surged in and out as he took to pacing, doing multiple laps around the chamber, eyes open, looking at nothing.

"Think, think. Think! No doors, no windows. No entrance, no exit. How did I get in here, then? The portal wouldn't have opened, just here, just for me, we all went through. It couldn't have. So, logically, we wound up somewhere, *first*. This surely happened after. Which means...I was put here."

It made the most sense, currently.

"Which means...there had to have been a manner in which I entered. There must be an exit."

He looked overhead, seeing the rounded rise of the ceiling, a single light fixture glowing up at its zenith. He reached, then reached on tiptoe, but his fingers didn't manage to even approach the upper curves. He went back down on flat feet, then snorted, the way Spyro usually did.

Bother!

"Did the same happen to the others, then?" he finally wondered. This made him stop altogether. Fear for his own self shifted violently to his comrades. Every world, they had entered together, a team, a crew, a family of big, big dragons. Despite all the muscle and power he had accumulated so far, Figment suddenly felt unbelievably small. "Wait!"

He checked, and the bag was still there, lashed tightly around his bulging pectorals. He sighed, then opened the top flap quickly, reaching into the remaining cluster of candies.

"Blair would have thought and done what I had just thought and done, I think," Figment chuckled, anxiously, as he pulled out a candy, covered in a swirl of dark, rich green and pink. "I can't force my way out, like this. Thinking only got me this far. Maybe, I ought to approach this more like Spyro would..."

It was either be proactive, or wait indefinitely. It didn't take long to choose.

"Stupid, it is, then," he laughed, as he let the candy settle on his tongue, then crunched on it hungrily. That he had grown fairly ready to eat something, anything, did contribute a bit more than he would have cared to admit. The moment Figment swallowed, it hit, and hit hard.

"OOH—"

Was all he managed, before the purple dragon's pink-slatted pectorals exploded out before him,

blowing up so large that their upper swells butted up into his chin, swelling up over either side. His chest boomed out over the topside of the table, with a stretchy, heavy *thump*, as his shoulders blew up on either end of his blimping neck. His tail shot out, forced into a slide against the counter, as Figment's horns surged out, his noggin bumping up into the curving ceiling, pushing along its contours as he groaned and shook, then ballooned even bigger.

His belly, in particular, expanded the fastest, inflating wider and fuller, his scales pulling rather pleasantly tight as it overtook the table, filling half the room, then all of it. His bulging thighs and feet were pinned near-instantly to the sides, crushing the counter into segments, then bits, then dust.

His whimpers caught and remained between both booming pectorals as they pinched his muzzle tighter, the entire space consumed in seconds by Figment's rumbling belly and massive muscles. Both seemed to expand faster, and faster, his neck blowing wider against his shoulders, which trembled and burst even larger, in response, along with his thighs and his still-exposed maleness. His man-like appendage and sacs mashed tighter and tighter to the walls as he huffed, trembled, and swelled even larger—yet, the room didn't give.

A flicker of outright panic flashed through his quaking form as he felt his belly balloon much, much bigger, forcing the rest of his swelling mass to flatten even tighter and harder against the sphere, until every other thing within was crushed to nothing, leaving only him. And he was still growing!

"HMMMMH!"

Come on, then, break. Break open!

There had to be an aperture, a flaw, somewhere. Any fraction of weakness. Any sliver of space.

Again, impossibly, Figment grew bigger; his muscles boomed so frantically huge that they managed to crowd one another, aggressively swelling out wider, even as his belly overtook everything more and more, forcing even their mighty bulk back flatter. The walls held, astonishingly, and Figment's fears redoubled.

Imagine it opening. Imagine it opening! It'll open! The door will open! The lock...I'm, ah...too strong...I'm too strong for it! I'm TOO BIG!!

The swelling dragon's body only seemed to grow more excited at the idea, and yet again, Figment managed to grow, and grow, until his billowing belly seemed to be all that there was to him. Still, horribly, the room didn't budge on iota—

CLICK

There, suddenly, it was. Muffled by raw bulk, to be sure, but it *was* there.

Yes! he thought, huffing hotly into his ever-growing, pink pectorals. *I'm much too powerful a creature now! I...I'm practically a god! This...little...ball...cannot hope t-to hold me...I'M GROWING...UNCONTAINABLE!*

Figment's body believed it entirely, and with a last, desperately tight, crushing spurt, it erupted bigger—so much bigger, this time, that something snapped around him, and with a rush of displacement

not too unlike hopping between worlds, Figment found himself slamming hard into a different wall. It was sheer, metallic, and actually rather tall, for the moment.

When he opened his eyes, despite having to stretch his massively over-thick neck to see past his chest, Figment saw the makings of another interior. This was more the rectangular sort, dark and underlit, industrial by design. His bulk rumbled hotly as he shook his head, then rose onto all fours. There was only a moment's time for him to take in what seemed to be stacks of racks, each one loaded with some sort of small sphere.

Before he could comprehend anything more to the space, Figment's body continued to grow, and the wide-eyed dragon gasped as he shook and quivered harder than before.

"Goodness, I thought I was d-done w-"

What in the world

Figment heard the voice, without hearing it, and a moment's shock overtook him, only to be beaten out as he rumbled and blew up even larger. His belly, now considerably bigger than the rest of him, exploded out, swelling unstoppably larger. Its sides and front and back blew out into the racks, jostling them, as his arms and neck and head pushed up, up, up into the ceiling, starting to dent it in seconds. He was already three times larger, now, though he had no points of reference to glean any useful numbers—and he was still growing bigger.

Wait

His muzzle stretched out along with his horns as his physique, already so powerful and wide, doubled in mass, stretching and groaning in all directions. He moaned and shook even harder, as the growth just kept coming, blowing him up and out; his belly contacted all four sides, warping the large rectangle out (and this time, it was easily done).

S-STOP

The materials to the ceiling dented and strained, loudly tenting up and up, as Figment's growing head pushed nonstop into it. His belly flattened tighter to the warping side walls, forcing them out more and more, until the entire room bulged out far, creaking, splitting, starting to shake as it gave way. Something tiny wriggled against Figment's stretching scales, finally registering through the vibrations and bulging, just as the entire room blew apart.

Light spilled in, organic and clear and sharp, as the massive Figment's belly blew free, obliterating the walls and roof. Warm Summer air flew in as he felt himself rocketing up bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger, his undersides and swollen thighs and rump and sacs crushing the floor down into the cracking earth below.

The light cleared in Figment's vision, leaving him with the rising view of a large, lush forest, a winding dirt road, and blue skies beyond. The view sank lower, still, and Figment twisted about fearfully as he continued to expand larger—or rather, the attempt was made to do so.

"OH!"

His newly-inflated belly made moving considerably more difficult as he sat there, measuring out what must have been an impressive 70-foot height, only to rumble and wince as he erupted even bigger, booming noisily up past 80 feet, then 90. His stomach and sides and back had rounded into a smooth, scaly sphere of its own, much as what had happened to others who had taken pink candies. His massive haunches and swelling feet resided wide apart down on the ground, his over-muscled, hulking arms and neck and head separated far up beyond by a building-sized mass of belly. The pink plating strained out, taut and creaking, pushed to parodical sizes by the sheer girth of his midsection. He blinked, then experimentally, thump-thumped his upper belly's curves with both soft paws, getting a fairly enjoyable drum beat out of them, as he closed his eyes and snorted, then blew up past one hundred feet in size.

"Haaaah," he huffed, shaking off the strange rush of it all. He had finally stopped, it seemed, at roughly 120 feet in height, and even more than that in width. Figment's rounded body wobbled as he tried to adjust to its new dimensions, going so far as to force himself into an awkward stand. "Ho, goodness...that is considerably different than the other ways, isn't it!"

PLEASE

Again, the voice called out, begging, and again, Figment jolted in surprise.

"What...who said that?" he asked, looking around, trying with mixed results to simply turn his bulk around. "Hello?"

GET OFF

How a voice could reach him from so far below, so clearly, was about as baffling as there being a voice, at all. It was more in his own head, than anything. Figment gulped, then with some measure of effort managed to waddle off of where he had landed moment earlier. A sigh of relief flooded his thoughts, just as close as it had been, even with him moving his gigantic bulk away.

"Are you alright?" Figment asked, looking around, having no luck seeing over his monstrously huge belly and massive pectorals. Everywhere he looked, there was muscle now. He had been bulky and thick before, to be sure...but now, he was monumentally muscled! He could have outdone even Spyro's huge mass! "I'm quite afraid I can't see you, friend!"

DOWN HERE.

Before Figment could repeat his predicament, a very small, very soft, gentle tap came, at his looming foot. A paw the size of a pinprick was petting politely on it, and Figment resisted the urge to move from shock, lest he hurt whoever was below.

"Ah! I mean, eh, ah! H-hello! I...think I'm a bit too bulky to see you, sorry! Could I...bother you to climb up me?"

He only needed wait a moment, before a soft tickling responded. The tiny being clambered up, up along Figment's leg, up onto his belly, and as he waited, trying not to laugh, he stole glances of the periphery. A large city loomed off to the left, and mountains to the right; up far ahead, beyond the forests, was a massive...facility, of some sort or other. The road they had been on certainly appeared to lead straight to it.

Hello, there!

Figment's attention returned, and he pushed his chin down into his neck bulk, looking at the vast plain of his pectorals, and the alien creature atop them. It rested there, a blue-black sort of...canine? It was roughly humanoid, with a white spike jutting from its chest—no, there were two more, as well, one coming out of the backs of both hands. Patches of cream color interrupted the overall-blue body, with a dark set of bulges rested out behind its head and perked ears, almost like hair.

"Oh! Hello!" Figment laughed, making the creature wobble in place as deep vibrations thundered out across his chest. "I'm terribly sorry to have pinned you like that! I just...you see, I wound up somewhere terribly strange, and couldn't get free, so I—"

A pokeball, yes, the voice returned, feminine and confident.

From where he was, at his massive size, Figment had trouble confirming something: it didn't seem like the creature's mouth had opened, when it responded. It didn't seem to move, at all, in fact.

"Er..."

*Yes, I'm speaking to you, in your thoughts. Don't be afraid! I haven't seen a mon like you before, especially one so big! No wonder your pokeball couldn't contain you for long! The balls compress you small, so you must have gotten really, really, **really** big, to break out of one! I didn't know dragon types had a growth ability that powerful!*

"Gracious, a...telepath!" Figment gasped, his huge tail wagging, though it was partially pinned under tons of bulging, rounded backside. "I didn't think such phenomena was real! And, excuse me, but...a mon? What's...a mon?"

The tiny creature, unfazed til now, finally looked baffled.

A pokemon. You must be one. You don't know what a pokeball is, either. Hmm. Well, pokeballs are meant to capture or contain pokemon. Humans use them to recruit mons, for battle or for companionship. Pretty standard, really. That building, far down the road? That's Devon. The Devon Corporation. Rather, it's one of their hidden facilities.

Figment looked back to it, then down to the creature.

Yes, we were headed there. Scientific research. Those things around you in that truck were all pokeballs, and each one held a captive mon inside. I snuck on to break them free, but you beat me to it.

"Then...I was captured!" Figment finished, frowning his massive purple brows. "I had friends with me, when I arrived here, so they might have been...with me..."

If they are, I can get them all to safety, don't worry! If you'll help, we can get everyone off this road, before any other Devon trucks show up. They own this tract, so no one else should be driving or wandering by.

"R-right, of course!"

Ah, thank you! Uh...

"Figment's my name, heh," the huge balloon-dragon answered. "Pleasure to meet you!"

Figmon? You must be from a very far region! I've never heard of your kind—and I know quite a few dragon types, too. But yes! Pleased to meet you, too! We had better move away from here! There's a dip in the valley, but the taller trees hide it from the road...you could probably fit down there, with me! Come on!

Relieved on multiple accounts, Figment grinned wide and nodded, letting the creature start to climb back down.

"Oh! But, what's your name?" he asked, having almost forgot.

Lucario!

It smiled back, before sliding just-as-ticklingly down the massive slope of his chest.

"Feel free to slide down on the straps of my bag," Figment offered, before realizing he'd outgrown the bag by a wide margin. He felt himself over, then relaxed, and called the bag back with his summon chant. "Bag, return!"

The moment Lucario landed, she looked back up, and saw it all happen, gasping in awe.

"I think we just have to wait this out," Cynder sighed, taking her seat on the crescent-shaped cushion below. Her breasts tapped down on the smooth tabletop that separated her bulky self from Spyro, who stood facing the spherical wall around them, testing it, his thick tail lashing in agitation.

"Nah, there's *got* to be a way out, here," he huffed, indignant. "Who ever heard of a room with no exit? Even if the door's shut, there has to be a door. Maybe they sealed it behind us, before we woke up? Right?"

Cynder cocked her head, more collected and quiet than her counterpart.

"Either way, I don't see how we're getting it open, on our own," she sighed. "Sit down, come on. Take a breather, for once. Let's talk."

"You sure are handling this great," Spyro laughed, turning to face her, his violet bulk impossibly huge and thick, in the overhead light. "This really doesn't bother you?"

"It does, but it could be worse," she offered. "At least we're here together."

Spyro fought against a wide beaming grin, stifling it down to a little crooked smile.

"Sure, yes. But I worry about Fig and Toothless and, I guess, Bartok. You think they're okay? I mean, even Baba Yaga got sucked in with us..."

"I imagine we'll find out what's what, soon. Sit, you."

She patted the other end of the seating, her hand ridiculously gentle, despite her overwhelming bulk. A secondary flick of her muzzle in that same direction sealed the deal, and Spyro cracked.

"Yeah, okay. For a minute."

His massive muscles still crowded against her own as he sat, even though both of them occupied the farthest reaches of the seat. They watched each other a moment, before Spyro's blush grew noticeable, and he made a cute cough.

"What?" he asked, getting unusually close to bashful.

"Just seeing the sights," Cynder said warmly. "I'm to understand that's a good thing to do, sometimes. There's nothing wrong with a moment of quiet, after all the insanity we've gone through."

"I'm not against a moment," Spyro huffed, scratching his thick pectoral idly. "Just the circumstances around it. I don't love prison scenarios that much."

"I don't disagree."

Oddly, for the first time in so many worlds, and so many adventures, the two of them settled into an awkward silence.

"It's a nice prison, at least, I guess," Spyro muttered, trying to mask it as a joke.

"The more I'm with you, the more different you are from him," she said, out of nowhere. There wasn't any judgment in her tone. "I wonder how he and you would have gotten along."

"Who? Your Spyro?"

"Well...he wasn't *mine*, I mean, I didn't own him," Cynder laughed, looking away. "He was just...a bit more quiet. Serious, I suppose."

"Meaning, I'm a big loud goofball," Spyro figured, though he was grinning.

"See, you get it."

Spyro's smile went down, then back up.

"Fair."

"I like goofy, I'm finding out," she soothed, her tail thumping down over his, under the table. "Don't undersell it."

"Undersell? I'm awesome!"

"Hehe! I think you'd have gotten even him to laugh. He was serious, but it was...I don't know, a more serious world, if that makes sense. Darker. Your world was lovely, and bright."

"Our world," Spyro added, nodding. "It's yours, too."

"That's nice of you, but—"

"Hey, no. Seriously. It's your world, too. You're a dragon, you belong there."

Cynder just went quiet, visibly holding back.

"...I wasn't a good one, Spyro. My past loomed so high, it took forever to get out of its shadow. He helped me do that. He saved me."

"He's a Spyro, of course he did," he laughed. "We're awesome. I can repeat it all you like."

"He was, yes."

"Are you...sure...you know..."

"I don't really know, now," Cynder interrupted, looking up. A long sniff followed. "I, ah...lost him. That's the best I can put it. He's just, he's gone. After saving our doomed world, there was a great blast of light, and I woke up with you, in your world. For all I know, he's waiting on me to return."

Silence.

"...Figment, he could probably..."

"Maybe. I'd like that. To know that he's okay, I mean."

The offer had been ongoing, but even this Spyro knew to let it where it was, and not push.

"If you need any traveling partners, when you do find out, just say the word."

"I like being here, too. With you, I mean. I think it's...I want you to know that, Spyro."

Spyro took a long breath, his bulk swelling a little bit. He held onto the moment.

"Yeah. Yeah, you too."

Cynder was up against him in a blink, leaning in close. Not to embrace, or to kiss, but just...to lean on him. A column of support. Likely, she had been more fearful and uncertain than he was, but was handling it better. Spyro just let her, and rested his chin on hers. The moment was there, so at long last, they had it.

"So," Cynder eventually began, trying to sniffle as quickly and quietly as possible, "I think I know how to get out of here."

"Yeah?" Spyro asked, just before Cynder grabbed his head on both sides, and pressed his muzzle to her scaly cleavage.

"Fire me up."

One moment had passed into another, and Spyro was ready faster than he should have been.

"Hold onto something," he growled, taking in a deep breath.

She squeezed him, and only him. Spyro continued welling up, his raw bulk pumping larger, stretching loudly, inflating out as he took more and more and more air in; he held, tensed in against Cynder's bulk, and blasted a hot, monstrous streak of flame, which tore into her skin harmlessly. No smolder, no smoke—only her dark scales starting to gratefully quiver and quake, before she roared and burst larger, heaving up in a sharp, rising rush of pure growth.

Her massive muscles detonated wider, thickening with power, her biceps bulging into her breasts, making them swell into tight mounds against Spyro's muzzle as he kept on blowing hot. The fire fed her faster and faster, his humongous thighs slipping and pressing against Spyro's outer form as they swelled bigger, stronger. Her horns stretched out, scraping the upper curve of the ceiling, as she grit her growing teeth, baring them in a pleased, unembarrassed snarl of bliss.

"H-haaaah! G-good, goo-ood! More!"

Spyro's tail looped dumbly about, whapping and thumping around behind him, as Cynder's feet swelled past him, each one as big as the huge Spyro's torso, and still growing. The counter top and table complained as her broadening lats and hips bullied into them, her bosom ballooning so large that it began to swallow Spyro's head as he blew and blew into her.

Cynder's fingers swelled as thick as Spyro's wrists, each on scratching and digging against the durable inner walls, as Cynder's tail hugged the back half of the sphere, taking up more and more room. Within seconds, she had boomed up three times larger than even Spyro, and she was only getting larger, faster. Spyro's massive, bulging arms wrapped affectionately around her growing torso, snuggling in tight, as he blew more and more flame into her body, feeling her abs burst bigger and fuller against his belly. Her wings flattened against the wall on her side, as she inflated too large for the room, pushing Spyro back against the opposing side of the ceiling, as she kept growing and bulging.

His back crushed up, up into the curve of the topside, forcing more air out, but Spyro persisted, almost pathologically, determined to make her as big as she wished—plus, break free. Sure.

Bit by bit, Cynder's body swelled on, stubbornly increasing against the confines of the sphere interior. Which one would win out was anyone's guess, given how the walls didn't budge at all, even as she took up every inch of space with throbbing, dark muscle and scales...

We're here! Come down the ridge, Figmon!

"Figment," the huge dragon gently corrected, as the trees warped and branches snapped in his passing. It wasn't so hard to notice the vast purple hill bulging up through the parted forest canopy, but on the plus side, no one had driven in on the roads yet, to see it happening. Inch by relative inch, Figment had rolled, tugged and dragged himself along, his immense, ballooned-out belly and sides making progress rather...*interesting*.

It was advantage and disadvantage when Figment cleared the ridge, then rolled uncontrollably down, down along the decline, crunching over the dirt and rock and bushes like a living boulder.

I live down here, Lucario telepathically began, moving a sheaf of stitched bamboo and reeds to reveal a cavern hole at the base of the slope. *We'll have to work outside, freeing all the pokemon, but if you just wait here, I can bring out some berries and AAAAAH!*

120 feet of inflated dragon rumbled and thudded down, Figment rolling downhill with escalating speed. Lucario leapt into her home, just before Figment's belly crashed into the cave wall, shaking the canopy overhead briefly, before the mania and panic died off into daytime quiet once more.

"Sorry," Figment sighed, the blushing giant coming to a rest against the lower portion of the slope. His belly rested into a soft dimple against the turf, as Figment caught his breath, closed his eyes, and tried to shake off the lingering disorientation. "Is your home alright?"

Haha, it was a bit of a shock, I won't lie, Lucario thought, trying to calm her own heartbeat down, as she used the latticed reed door to corral dozens of pokeballs into a group outside of her home. *But no harm done! Alright, now...in order to release these pokemon, we'll need to push every one of these buttons in the center, see? I'll line a bunch in a row, and you can slap them all with your tail, and save me a lot of time! Ready?*

"O-of course," Figment chuckled, blinking off the nausea. "If it helps me free my friends, as well as help innocent creatures out, then by all means, line them up!"

She did just that, as Figment watched her work.

When all was finished, Figment counted about 68 pokeballs, all lined up into a modest grid on the soil. Each one had been pushed into the dirt just enough, so that the chances of them rolling off were as reduced as possible. It could have been some high-tech garden of sorts, a thought which further sparked Figment's own imagination as he watched her dust her mitts and step back.

Alright, just give them all a light thump of your tail, please!

"Step back," Figment asked, as she did so. "Here's to it!"

His massively bloated tail lurched up off the ground, Figment's tongue sticking out in a deep-focus blep as he took aim, waited, calculated, then let it *whump* down onto the full lot. A series of snaps rose from under his tail's bulk, as dozens of latches were undone, and the makings of a collective flash of light blazed along the borders of Figment's tail, before it died away.

Lucario watched, her hands up over her slender muzzle, as Figment lifted his tail gently, to find dozens and dozens of small pokemon clinging in fear and shock to its underside.

"Did it work?" Figment asked, unable to see from his sheer size.

Yes! Yes, this is great! Lucario thought, with a joyful mental tone. *Thank you, Figment!*

From up high upon the slope, Figment observed one, then five, then twenty tiny creatures shambling off from his tail, shaken and shocked. Lucario was there immediately, growling soft little

grunts and ushering more and more of them into the cave. Some stopped to gawk up in awe at the humongous dragon, who waved sheepishly, before Lucario soothed them an extra little bit.

Do you see your friends anywhere? she asked, as the last ones wobbled indoors.

"Not yet, no," Figment sighed, newly concerned. "Was that all of the pokeballs?"

Yes, from the looks of it. You're sure they weren't in the crowd? You're pretty far off, given your gigantic size, and all.

"They were just as big as me, actually, we were...kind of a party of giants, I suppose you could say, heh. You mentioned this Devon company, they own this area? So, they have many of those vehicles, those trucks?"

Lucario had peered into the cave, to double-check on everyone; she did a quiet count, then turned back to Figment, nodding.

That's right, many trucks. And yes, you're right, Figment...they could be on any of them. Hunting parties and patrols are regular here, around the clock. I can't tell you how many times I've had to move my operations to free other pokemon. They've caught me, what...four times, now?

"Goodness," Figment balked, cocking his huge head. "You've escaped five times?"

Heh, Lucario huffed, folding her arms proudly. It gets a little more difficult, each time. Those humans aren't stupid. They just underestimate pokemon, thankfully.

"Then, you would know what kind of a company they are..."

They do good, in the world, but that comes at a cost, Lucario explained, her thoughts going dark. They aren't evil, exactly...they just don't let good stand in the way, when it comes down to it. They've experimented on countless pokemon for research, and that can turn...ugly.

"Ah, I see," Figment murmured, unsure what to say. "But you look unscathed, thankfully!"

Why, thank you!

Figment had questions, to be sure. He wanted to ask if her telepathy was resultant of experimentation, if other pokemon communicated in the same manner (none of them verbally thanked her in any language he recognized); he even wondered if they were variant fauna of other animals in this world, animals that were purely feral. Were all pokemon tantamount to animals?

But, at the moment, only one question truly mattered:

"Do all of those captured pokemon go to that center, in the distance? Would my friends have wound up there, you think?"

Every captured pokemon in this region ends up here, yes. Why? I hope you aren't planning on a direct confrontation, Figment! They are smaller than you, but they have very advanced machinery and technology. I wouldn't cause a direct fuss with them. You're big, but you aren't big enough for that!

The thought of a mad Figment on a rampage was actually funny, very funny.

"Heh, heavens, no! I actually would like to ask for your help."

Lucario looked him over.

Me? But...you're so big!

"I thought my size didn't matter."

Now, Lucario was blushing, outright.

Well, no—I just mean, if YOU can't take them all down, what good would I be?

"You're clearly smart enough to get out of their lair over and over," Figment reasoned, "so it stands to reason, you can get back in, too. Can you show me a way to enter, without being noticed?"

But, she began, rubbing her head over in confusion. Again, you're huge! I know pipelines that funnel into the storage and waste expulsion units, sure...but you would never fit...

"True! About that..."

Figment closed his eyes, letting Lucario watch quietly. As she did, the freed pokemon all gathered at the cavern entrance, watching on, wide-eyed. Figment let out a deep breath, then spoke:

"I'm quite small. I imagine I'm roughly your own size, Lucario. Yes, just your very size!"

At first, nothing happened. Lucario shook her head partly, her mouth open, but the words weren't ready. Then, she noticed it: Figment...*was* smaller. Not by much—he must have slipped down to about 90 feet, but it was a visible difference.

What in the world!?

"I'm...just as small...as you are..."

Well, I wouldn't call myself...small, per se...

"I'm a humble little size, I've contained all my giant size down into a trim, little tiny form..."

Lucario furrowed her brow the slightest bit.

Could you not call me 'little', Figment?

Yet, it was working, and more and more quickly; Figment had dwindled down, down, shrinking from 50 feet down to 30...then 19...then 10...in less than a minute, he had somehow *willed* himself down to her size, at a much more manageable four feet in height. Throughout, Figment was clearly focusing intensely, and by the time he was her own size, the dragon was openly sweating. His massive belly had compacted down to a much more slender, regular shape, and even his fantastic muscles

seemed forced into a more normal physique.

"There...s-see?" Figment panted, clearly straining to maintain his imagined state.

That's incredible! Lucario growled, looking him all over, as the other pokemon just watched in complete stunned silence. *How did you manage that? You can grow and shrink?*

"I...hehe...I'm a creature of imagination!" he chuckled, his belly starting to bloat out again. He refocused, and it slipped back into place. "I can imagine myself and other things, and change them...well, somewhat. I'm getting a lot stronger with it, lately!"

But you're...real.

"Indeed! Ah, I can explain myself better, as we move. Focusing all my attention on this alteration is...a bit difficult, I should say! Haha! Would you show me the way in, please? While I can, ah...maintain this?"

Oh...oh, o-of course! Yes! We could free...we could free everyone in there! With your powers, we could...oh, that would be incredible! Come, come, follow me, Figment!

The little dragon nodded gladly, following her into the cavern, the onlooking pokemon all parting politely for him. He thanked them as he passed, before the small reptiles and mammals and insect creatures all murmured to one another with single-word responses; they turned and cheered the pair on, rather abruptly, as they moved to the back of the cavern system.

As they neared a small underground lake, Lucario pointed out across it, at a series of pipes feeding into the far end.

This is what you want, Lucario began, motioning out over the water. *This leads to the expulsion units and cleaning tanks at the back end of the sanitation ward. Just follow me in, I know which line connects to the R&D section at Devon.*

"R&D?" Figment repeated, as his muscles bulged out bigger again, and he willed them in line.

Research and development.

Of course it was. There was so much that made sense here, scientifically, yet so much he didn't know. Frankly, it made the laser of Figment's focus part out and split, and again his body began to grow back to how it really was. The purple little dragon's bulk exploded hotly, his eyes rolling back as his chest burst larger, and his belly began to expand out into a stretchy balloon of girth. Lucario stepped back as Figment quickly blew up to 20 feet, looming over her, before he compacted yet again, with more strain than before.

You're sure you can control this? Lucario rightly asked.

"I can, ah, yes," Figment wheezed, nodding. "It looks as though I'll really have to concentrate, though, so...I might stay quiet and keep focusing, while you l-lead. No offense."

Lucario growled and nodded, offering up a smile of solidarity.

No, none taken at all! Okay, then, follow me! Let's save your friends!

After half an hour of being wedged in tight between Cynder's bosom, even Spyro began to feel that something likely needed to change, soon. The mighty dragons had matched wits and bulk with the strange sphere, and remarkably, the sphere was winning. He had long since stopped his efforts to pump Cynder up any larger, simply because there was no room to grow into anymore. She was already much too large for the interior, as it was. Her every grunt, her every little twitch, Spyro felt it all. Again, he wasn't quite complaining, just...the expectation of freedom usually followed close to growth.

"Bit cramped," he sighed.

"I know," Cynder moaned, flush with humiliation. "I thought it would do the trick!"

"Same here."

Again, they waited.

"Hey..." Spyro started.

"What?" Cynder huffed, her bulging body creaking softly. "What is it—AH, STOP! AHAH!"

From either sheer boredom, or the onset of sphere fever madness, Spyro had begun tickling on Cynder's huge lats, scritching and playing away freely, with what sliver of mobility he had. She squirmed uselessly, her thick abs bulging into him as she laughed and thrashed here and there, shifting the entire sphere. Again, it didn't bend, break, or anything—but it *did* shift.

"DON'T YOU DARE Spyro NO"

He tickled even harder, and the wheezing giantess thrashed again, jerking away from something she couldn't even remove herself from. Again, the ball shifted, the center of gravity slipping right, then hard left, then forward, until their entire world fell into a spinning tumble. The sphere struck something hard, on the outside, and with a sudden *click*, everything changed.

There was a flash, not too unlike the portals, and then, both Spyro and Cynder were on the floor. It was metallic and hugely wide, something like a strange silo or grain barn. Storage, perhaps. Huge smoothed-over boxes rested in stacks against the far wall, its angles and ceilings much more familiar to the two dragons.

"It worked!" Spyro shouted, proud of himself, before Cynder bopped his head over with her wings, harmlessly battering him with unrestrained wrath.

"Don't do that again!" she seethed, before snorting out a thick cloud of smoke.

"Sorry, sorry," he offered, as he slid down her much-bigger body, setting down heavily to the floor. Now freed, Spyro must have stood a good fifteen feet tall, and his muscles remained thoroughly intact. In comparison, Cynder sat up at a whopping forty feet in size, meaning she likely would have stood about 70 or 80 feet, easily. She stopped shy of doing the deed, however, as the ceiling nearly

impacted her head. "I figured it would get us out, though, so don't be too mad."

"I'm not mad," she huffed, angrily. "Just...wondering where we are, now. I don't see anyone."

"Fig!?" Spyro hollered, his thick voice booming and echoing out over the interior. "Toothless? Bartok? Anyone?"

"So, we did get separated," Cynder moaned. "I was hoping they were...I don't know...next door."

"They could still be here," Spyro said, rebuilding the positivity. "Let's see what we—"

A very large doorway lid open on its own, vertically rising in segments up off the floor, far away. The two giants turned to see something stepping through, from the darkness of the adjoining room. It was, of all things...a dragon!

"Hey, how about that," Spyro said, smiling wide. "Alright! A fellow great!"

The dragon stood only about seven feet tall, but it didn't look too frightened of either of them. It was a male, had to have been, mostly orange, with a big patch of lighter tone for his belly. Two medium-sized wings rested at his back, a long neck leading up to a long muzzle, two lengthy stub-horns, and an intense set of eyes. He snorted firmly, starting daggers, but Spyro kept on:

"Hello! Heh, you must be in charge, here. Name's Spyro, pleased to meet you!"

"A talking dragon," a smaller voice started, just as a human stepped in from the dark. He was clad in full gear, some sort of...fabric-like armor, the likes Spyro had never seen before, in his world. He glanced back to Cynder, who shrugged her huge arms. "I never thought I would see this before. You said your name's Spyro? Well, I'm Anders, chief of Devon Corp. security. You're trespassing here. What, did you escape from R&D? Did those lunatics make some new hybrid pokemon, or something?"

"Poke-what?" Spyro balked, cocking his head. "Look, we're dragons...we're uh, not from here."

"We're from another world," Cynder started, when the smaller orange dragon bellowed, seemingly angered at all the talking.

"You got that right, Leon," Anders barked, the tall human patting the taller dragon on the muzzle. "They're super-suspicious. I'll call for backup, buddy...you, take them down, and shut them both up."

The dragon nodded, snorting out a small plume of fire. Spyro just guffawed, and loudly.

"Sorry, pal, but we're not up for that. And your buddy here isn't up to my chest. Just let us be on our way, before we have to shove through. Okay?"

Neither the dragon nor his human seemed remotely fazed, which fazed Spyro.

"I was kind of hoping you'd resist," Anders said, as he fished something out from behind his tac gear. "Ready, Leon? We're gonna test this bad boy out, at last! Enjoy yourself!"

Leon seemed overtly enthused, slamming his tail on the floor as he nodded. A large burst of fire hugged its tip, making Spyro squint in surprise at it—until Anders brought up some sort of large ball, big enough to overflow his open palm. It glowed bright pink, almost neon.

"What's that?" Cynder whispered. Spyro threw his bulky arms up.

"I don't—"

"Okay, Leon!" Anders shouted, rearing back, as though he was going to throw the thing right at this partner. "Dynamax...**activate!**"

11.

The old man straightened his military cap, then adjusted his large black coat, its tall collar jostling around his neck. An aggressively healthy gray mustache jutted out past his jawline, in an inverted 'V', covering nearly all of his mouth. He had no shirt to speak of, meaning the coat did the job, his blue jeans held up by a large black belt. The bottom of his coat tapered out into tatters, scars from countless exploits and battles, alike, too many to count. This was a tough man, all hard bark and grit.

Yet, even he hesitated, as he looked the odd pokeball over in his hand, silently reading it. It was a new design, so far as he knew. It looked heavy-duty, serious, with extra sealant in the lining.

"From Devon, you say?" was all he said, as he continued looking it over.

The tall orange-cream dragon nodded, her antennae bobbing along with the motion. She wore goggles, tailor-made, a large leather satchel hugging her belly as she used her thick claws to snap its top flap shut. Her answer came as a soft but powerful growl as she smiled.

"Strange, getting a handout from them, such as it is. That *is* what it is, isn't it?"

"Ruuarr."

"Heh. Well, you've always been straight with me, so...if you say so, then alright. I'll take you on your word, any day. I owe you that, and more."

The Dragonite grinned wide, coming in for a hug. At her 7-foot size, the old man only made it up to her feral chest plates, as she snuggled on him thankfully. At this point, the elder knew to just let it happen, and move on. It wasn't like he really minded it, anyhow.

"Hah! Right, still got that spirit, it looks like. Good! You take my appreciation with you to Devon, when you report back, then. They're lucky to have this good a courier!"

She flapped her wings a few times, snapping the goggles back on, then took to flight. The old man's mustache failed to conceal his smile as he waved the Dragonite off, just outside the Hoenn League's gym. She called out a friendly goodbye as she went:

"Ruuu!"

The sounds of the city and the birds and the ocean breeze returned, as he went back inside, though the calm didn't follow him in. Things like this didn't happen, without a serious cause. Drake knew better than to second-guess that big of a corporation, at least, out loud. He had enough brass in him to build an old-time band, but he still knew what world he was in. Besides, he had a match coming up, and one didn't keep in the Elite division by slacking.

"What do I do with *you*, though," he wondered, holding the ball up on aged fingertips. "I suppose they want someone with a little experience, handling...whatever you are, in there. So, will you help, or hinder me?"

His match wasn't until later in the day, so the old man quietly wandered the emptied halls of the Grand Pokemon League, coming to a stop in the arena. Vendors and patrons and spectators wouldn't be in for hours, meaning he had a little space to himself. No sense in spooking whatever was in the mysterious ball, after all.

"Alright, then," Drake said, plainly. "They must want data, so let's get this all settled and done."

With one arm behind his back, Captain-style, he lobbed the ball out with the other, and let it bounce once on the arena floor. As expected, it clicked along its center, and snapped open on a back hinge. What was less expected was what came out of it.

The flash of light from the ball cleared, to reveal a dragon, but a type Drake had never seen before, ever. The old dog had seen much in his time, but even his eyes widened—then narrowed.

"What in the age-old seas..."

There, looming over him quite thoroughly, was an all-black dragon, his head shaking awake atop a thick, bulging neck. His entire body shone, polished and scaly, under the high lamps of the arena, sparkling across humanoid arms and legs, all positively packed with unthinkably huge, swollen muscle. Drake surmised easily-enough the gender, just taking a quick glance between both massive thighs, catching a sudden glimpse of a package as big as he was, which flopped onto the floor openly.

"G-good grief! What...what kind of dragon-type is this!?"

What had those maniacs at Devon been up to?

"Mmmn," the bulky dragon rumbled, shaking his head again. A series of black flipper-like fins shook along with, before a pair of brilliant emerald eyes blinkered open, then fell upon him, down below. The giant regarded him sleepily for a moment, surprisingly unconcerned, before all that massive muscle shifted, and the man-dragon stretched high, snorting. "Hmm-hmmn...morning."

Cat-like to the point of casual indifference, he popped his thick, strong neck, and huffed in satisfaction, licking his muzzle over with a big, pink fork-tongue.

"Ah. M...morning, to you," Drake murmured, frozen in place. His stoicism held, but only barely.

"I must have been asleep awhile," the huge male rumbled, scritchng happily under his jawline

with massive claws. All told, Drake figured him to be easily fifty feet tall. His Salamance wouldn't have been much larger than this monster's pectorals, together, in width. "I don't see Figment or anyone around. Did they go off somewhere?"

"Ah...I...couldn't say."

The dragon's fins perked out, and he offered a wide grin.

"That's fine, don't trouble yourself. I can find them! You know, you...you don't look like a Viking, at all. That's funny."

"Ah...thank you."

"Hehe!"

His laughter boomed, his powerful chest swelling gently from the flexing inherent. Drake, still roughly speechless, searched quickly for the best words. If it were a battle happening, he would have been in trouble. He hadn't been this thrown in years.

"Well, uh. Uh. Pleased to...meet you, then. Name's Drake, Hoenn Elite. Welcome...to the Hoenn Grand Pokemon League, uh..."

The huge dragon's eyes were wide now, big and open and intelligent.

"Toothless," he answered, grinning, a mouthful of teeth instantly adding to Drake's confusion.

"Toothless. Yes. Well, as your trainer, I'm happy to have you here. You uh, don't act like the usual pokemon, I have to say. What with the...speech, and all, and the...anatomy..."

"Thank you!" Toothless chirped, his grin going cutely crooked, as he heavily shifted into a seated position, and cocked his head. "I just learned to talk recently! It's a little more bothersome than a good, clear roar, but it's not bad."

"Did...Devon teach you, then?"

Toothless' head cocked the other way, his fins flopping over.

"Who?"

"Well...Devon. The Devon corporation. They sent you to me. I have your pokeball, right over there, the one you came from. See?"

He patiently pointed, and Toothless saw the tiny thing on the arena floor, near his massive foot.

"Huh! How about that. No, they didn't. I came here with my friends, Figment, Spyro, Cynder, and this fuzzy dragon, Bartok. I know you don't know where they are now, but maybe you saw them earlier? I really should get back to them, after we got separated."

"I think there's some confusion," Drake interjected, sterner. "I'm your new trainer. I'm to see

what you're made of, before putting you to any official matches. So, all that strangeness aside...what can you do, exactly? Let's see your power level, your moves..."

Now, it was Toothless that was squinting his eyes.

"My what?"

"You must be a pokemon, a dragon-type. A rare, *rare* one, to be sure, but still. What all can you do, in battle? Let's have it, friend. I want to know my pokemon, front to back, and back."

Toothless snorted, lidding his eyes in a bit of a bored manner.

"I can tail-whip, breath fire, barrel roll at high speed...my roar is quite good, too. Heh. But really, sir, I have to be going. Good luck to you, and all your pokery-balling and things. Pleasure to meet you, so long, farewell—"

At that, he stood tall, so tall that his head fins nearly bumped a few light fixtures set in the ceiling's framework. His huge feet twisted and moved along the cracked floor as he looked this way and that, then sighed.

"Don't suppose you know the exit?"

By that point, Drake had moved himself over to the side, getting near enough to scoop the pokeball up in one hand. By the time Toothless bothered to look down to the old man for an expected answer, that same ball sailed forth, bumped Toothless' leg muscle, then opened up wide. A great wave of light overtook the giant dragon so fast that only a flicker of bafflement managed to cross his face, before he was sucked back inside the ball. There was a moment of resistance as Drake collected it once again, holding it with both hands as it jerked this way and that.

"Incredible," he muttered, gulping, as the ball rested, then bucked around, frantically fighting in his grip, and making him purse his lip with wide eyes. "Hey, don't struggle now, hold on! You...shouldn't fight it..."

Undeterred, the ball leapt out of Drake's hands, rolling angrily out along the floor.

"Hey!"

The dignified leader had no choice but to scramble after it as it rolled along, as inside the ball, Toothless slammed up against the interior ceiling, straining his fantastic muscles so hard they bulged grossly bigger, by a few degrees.

"Hey! Old man, let me out! Whatever you just did, you let me back out, *right* now!"

As he ran into the adjoining hallway, Drake kept bracing for it; he was certain the strange pokemon would explode back out of the ball, at any moment, in a sour mood. Yet, the ball remained closed, throughout, even as it rolled and bounced off a far wall, skidding along on polished tiles.

Had Devon really done it? They actually had pokeballs that could keep a pokemon inside?

It was suddenly a small wonder, that they did, considering the cargo.

"Calm down, in there!" Drake ordered, sternly, as he collected the ball back up in both hands. "Listen! I'm just using this to move you somewhere better—you're too big, otherwise!"

Despite his struggling within, Toothless did hear. His arms tensed as he gave the lid interior another massive push, before huffing in irritation, and holding fast. This really wasn't his idea of a solid morning. As Drake held the ball, the resistance lessened, then grudgingly stopped, and went still.

"Okay," the old man huffed, nodding. "Thank you. Glad to see you're a reasonable sort. Tell you what: I need to battle in a few hours, and I want you to anchor my team. See what you're made of. I need to know you, your spirit, same as with all my pokemon. Otherwise, I don't know if you're the sort of dragon I should really be helping, you understand?"

The ball rested silently, listening.

"Good lad. You help me out, and I'll absolutely help you back. Promise. And I can help you, without a giant dragon crashing around in an unfamiliar place, getting into trouble and causing damage. Doesn't that sound better than fumbling around in a foreign place?"

Inside the high-tech ball, Toothless' scaly brows were still furrowed, angry and low. His nostrils flared, but he didn't say no. It made sense, sure—he just didn't like having to abide by it, sans choice. His tail lashed around against the inside, like an upset pet, but abide he did.

"Excellent. If you'll just be patient, I'll get you to your friends. First, we've got a battle to win."

The pokeball (or whatever Anders called it), quite oversized in the human's hand, flared violet-pink at his command; neon contrails lashed over every etching, every crevice, casting a light from the surface that plunged all of storage into an unnatural light, both bright and dark.

Despite their greater size and bulk, both Spyro and Cynder winced, their eyes unused to such an oddity—and they had been around. All the confused pair really understood, at that moment, was that everything about it was utterly *wrong*.

"Maybe we should—"

The beginnings of a solid idea formed in Cynder's mouth, before the neon ball surged out even bigger than it already was, inflating to nearly twice its size, until it obscured Anders' entire hand beneath it. The glow increased ominously, as though whatever power it held were barely contained, wild, a beast on a breaking leash. Spyro sympathized.

Then, came the throw.

The ball didn't just leave his hand, it leapt. The momentum required to lob such a large object showed, as it sailed in an eerie slow motion arc, hurled not at Cynder nor Spyro...but right at Leon.

The orange dragon bellowed in naked delight as it struck his body, which in turn became...not so much whole, but pure energy, in the same shape. And that shape was expanding, quickly. The

dragon-shaped mass of pink-purple energy swelled up a foot, trembled, then crackled with intensifying bolts of energy as his size pushed higher, again. Anders watched, wide-eyed and rapt, as Leon's shoulders rose to meet his head, looking progressively up as his partner rumbled deeper and deeper.

"Uh," Cynder started, as Spyro stepped forward, throwing his bulging chest out defiantly.

"Puh! That's cute, but we've faced bigger. *Way bigger*. Seriously, just let us go on our merry way, already. Or do you think this amateur hour growth spurt is going to turn things around?"

"I do," Anders replied, a humorless chuckle riding shotgun. As he spoke, the nine-foot Leon swelled to twelve, a greater gain pumping his energy-infused body up even taller. "Right, Leon?"

The glowing dragon answered with another rumbling burst of growth, continuously burgeoning larger, and larger, and larger. Already-thick haunches swelled wider, stronger, stretching loudly in time with his ovular belly as it ballooned bigger and fuller. In seconds, Anders stood only belly-height to the dragon, which huffed out a plume of neon as he pulsed up, up past 15 feet...18 feet...20 feet...

One second later, and Leon stood 24 feet high, outsizing Spyro altogether. Spyro's lingering bravado held fast, but as Leon trembled, balled his growing fists tight, then burst up to 48 feet, serious cracks began to form in the dyke.

"He's not stopping," Cynder gulped, as Leon huffed out an even larger streak of energy, his body trembling even deeper as bolts of power lanced through it. Even being roughly twice as large as Leon, Cynder sounded like she knew the gap was closing, and quick.

"I know," Spyro comforted, though the way in which he stepped back said much more. Indeed, Leon's belly was encroaching fast, and at a much more modest fifteen feet, that made the dragon's belly a wall—and the wall was getting *bigger*.

Leon snorted and shook all over, tensing tight, before booming uncontrollably to 96 feet, putting both dragons in his shadow in one thick, hard bulge of growth. His head and thickening neck thumped callously up into the lower vault of the ceiling, forcing the dragon into an evermore looming crouch as he adjusted. More and more weight piled onto the flooring, cracking and snapping tiles as the surface started to warp and sag under his girth.

"It works," Anders murmured, awestruck, even as he too backed away. "It really works! Incredible...I didn't think he'd get...so...big!"

Leon blew out a streak of pink-coated flame, as if letting off pressure that kept building and building; he hotly panted and grit his glowing teeth as his body quivered, pulsed, then billowed out even larger, again. His head slid out over the ceiling awkwardly, skidding and stretching as his inflated neck pushed it forth as his shoulders and teardrop belly and chest boomed up to join them.

In less than eight seconds, Leon had swollen from roughly 6 feet to nearly 200, his overpowered body bright and radiant as it filled the back quadrant of the storehouse wing. Even Anders' tiny self was left to crawl atop a single bulging toe claw for safety, as the walls groaned against his scaly bulk. Spyro could have fit in one hand, easily, Cynder in a full-on hug. The outer glow continued to cover and course through Leon's humongous body, alive, moving, knowing, *excited* to be free. Strange clouds formed and swirled around his bulging neck as he huffed a massive pink storm of energy loose,

shuddering with an overload of confidence and size.

"Okay, that...that's actually pretty not-bad," Spyro rumbled, defensively flexing his mightier bulk out for show. That he was still backing away did admittedly harm the gesture. "Need to get one of those, heh..."

Wobbling to a stand, as authoritatively as possible, Leon pointed to Spyro and Cynder, and took a deep enough breath to holler with:

"Leon...Dragon Pulse!"

So he ordered, and, despite the sheer size difference at play, Leon obeyed.

Spyro and Cynder glanced to one another, with the split second's worth of morbid curiosity they were allowed, as Leon's massive jaws opened up overhead. A concussive shock wave tore loose, slamming into everything at top-speed, and the entire wing shuddered and rattled on impact. Stacked crates shattered, pokeballs flew free, and Spyro and Cynder stumbled back into a spin as splinters and glass and shrapnel flew wild.

Even Anders went flying back from the force of the attack (especially him, in fact). His back thudded into his Charizard's huge ankle, both catching and hurting him at the same time. The entire sector groaned in complaint, as the aftershock died out, leaving ruin in the massive, room-filling dragon's wake.

"Ho-okay," Spyro coughed, teetering upright among a forest of shattered wood and scattered plastic balls. He shook it off, then scowled, no longer interested in diplomacy (such as he was ever capable of). "OKAY!"

A quick flare of nostrils, a swell of plated pectorals stretching out, and Spyro blasted out a screaming pillar of fire, which crashed up into Leon with monster force, impacting hard into the giant dragon's chest—yet, the massive dragon took it, every single bit. It was only through compliment of Cynder's darkflame peppering in tandem with Spyro's attack that got the bigger dragon to actually flinch any. Really, though, the term 'flinch' might have been a gross kindness. All the mighty Leon did was twitch some, then shake it off with a deep snort and an over-satisfied smile.

"Hah!" Anders began, dusting himself off. "So, you're both fire types, too! My Leon's well-trained! Tempered! You both can do your worst! In fact...let's see how you do against the same! Leon, Fire Blast! Go!"

The few slight scratches their combined attack left up on Leon's looming chest vanished as his maw lowered over them, then opened once again. The name of the command, doubled with the bright blaze rising within the dragon's gullet left little doubt as to what was coming.

"Spyro, down!" Cynder shouted. Through enough time together, he knew well enough to drop low to the cracked floor, just as Cynder's colossal, scaly breasts descended. Both heavy, rounded globes crashed directly over him, flattening and dimpling warmly against his huge muscles; her humongous arms hugged around herself as she laid flat, covering him entirely, just as a column of volcanic flame spewed out, hammering down.

"Anders, this is Delta! We've got your position, report! What on Earth's going on, there?"

The voice crackled to life, hissing loudly over the man's communicator. He snatched it up with one hand, bringing it up to his face, even though his eyes never left the awesome sight of that much fire blasting forth from any living thing, let alone his precious comrade.

"Anders here. We've got two intruders, dragons, fire-types. never seen their species before. Leon's got them on the defensive, already, don't worry."

"Don't worry!?! What's your Charizard doing, in there? All the sensors have gone berserk, and the camera feed is...wait...he's huge! What did you do!?"

A deep rumble rose slowly, from within all that billowing flame, though Anders didn't seem to take notice at the moment.

"My job, that's what! Remember your rank, Delta! The R&D heads wanted a trial run of the new Dynamax ball, and I'm giving them valuable data, by the truckload. Just hang tight for backup, and watch the show!"

"But...he shouldn't be that huge...and why...is he still glowing like that? That shouldn't—"

"Yeah, well, my Leon's *special*, isn't he—"

At that, Cynder's form burst out through the fire attack, swelling wildly out of control. Her bosom ballooned bigger and wider, mashing forth against the wall of Leon's belly, making the gigantic dragon clamp his mouth shut in surprise, cutting the attack short as Cynder blew up into him. Down under-breast, Spyro could only struggle against the escalating weight and heft of both mounds as they inflated rapidly, each groaning and swelling from comparative rooms to *houses*. Her muzzle loomed over the pair as she gasped and grit her teeth, shaking and trembling, before blowing up one last time, booming tight into Leon's stunned self as she fully matched his own 200-foot size.

This, naturally, left little room at all in that sector of the storage wing. That, in turn, left Anders with a female dragon foot wedged awkwardly over Leon's, her toes pushing him flat to Leon's big ankle for a second time.

"Anders? Report! The pressure sensors are going crazy, in the South wing! We can't have destruction of property, just so you can have fun screwing around!"

The dimensions of the quadrant spoke for themselves—400 feet, even. Both Cynder and Leon found no proper end to either party, as every molecule of available space was devoured by lighter and darker shades of scaly girth. With no room to move, the stalemate settled in, uncomfortable and tight, as Anders struggled to work his pinned arm up against the webbing between Cynder's massive toes.

"He's not answering—okay, activate safeguard X-7B! Deploy, right now!"

"No," Anders grunted, trying to lift the communicator up high enough. "They're...mine..."

"Get...off of my...chest," Cynder growled, fussing uselessly. Leon simply grumbled in reply, his voice so big it buzzed against her scales, almost pleasantly so.

"I outrank...you, you morons! Don't...you dare..."

Regardless, the ceiling and floor vents slid further open, and a stream of gas began to sneak in; it took some doing, considering how very little room there was to even fill, but after a moment's confusion, both Cynder and Leon's eyes began to droop low, struggle, then close. Anders, being somewhat squirreled away below, only lasted a moment longer, before he too passed out.

Though it had been a silent trip, Figment couldn't help picking up on Lucario's raw excitement. She seemed overwhelmed by the idea of being able to really free everyone under Devon's yoke of progress, and Figment caught flashes and flickers of it here and there. There was plenty of room to maneuver about, given how ridiculously big around the expulsion pipes were, but every now and then the sheer emotion Lucario gave off would slam into Figment through her psychic link, and the little dragon's concentration would loosen, blowing him up bigger once again.

"I-I've got it, not to w-worry," Figment immediately soothed, as Lucario turned to see him booming up bigger, behind her. His muscles surged angrily, dead-set on expanding back to their real size, and Figment redoubled his efforts to imagine himself at a constant small size.

If you're really sure, she thought-spoke, watching the purple dragon's body erupt even larger, until his 20-foot body nearly blew up to fit the interior ring of the pipe. On the plus side, we're almost there, so just hang on!

Only a moment later, Lucario gulped, then went still. Figment had only just packed himself down to proper size, when he bumped into her, making his slender arms tremble and swell back out with stretching muscles.

This isn't right, she thought, cocking her head in the darkness. Thankfully, the pipe was fairly clean, but staying there any longer than necessary was...unwanted. Up ahead, they've blocked off the route. Was this pipe decommissioned?

"They shut it down?" Figment asked, forcing his bulk back in with an exhausted huff.

Maybe they caught on to me coming in through here, before...either way, we can't stay put here. If they do another flush of the system, we could get blown clear out!

"What?"

Lucario looked in every conceivable direction, biting her lip in much the same way Figment used to. She looked up, lastly, and stayed that way a moment.

Okay...they closed the pipe off, ahead...but they still need to flush it, so...yes! Figment, up above us! There's a runoff opening!

Figment was from a less-advanced world, but he still understood irrigation and plumbing structural systems; he needed no explanation on anything, and when he looked up at the hole overhead, hiding in the dark, he grinned.

"Ah, brilliant! Let's get ourselves up there!"

Well, that part I'm...not sure how to really do, Lucario sighed. Even standing on your shoulders, I couldn't get close to the ceiling of the pi-WHOA!

Figment was already hugging the blushing pokemon softly, letting himself tremble and blow back up to 10 feet, then 15. She only struggled a moment or two out of fresh shock, before she looked to him, and laughed, wagging her little tail about against his growing belly.

Of course! Figment, that's great!

"G-get atop my h-head!"

In seconds, Figment's head rose up into the aperture, followed by his overgrown neck; at 30 feet in size, his shoulders mashed into the topside around it, swelling into greater definition, as his biceps boomed out, in time with his expanding, stretchy belly, filling the pipe segment below. Lucario had easily leapt up off his pectorals, up his neck, so that she rested into a crouch atop his lengthening muzzle; the moment he overfilled the vertical pipe, Figment forced himself smaller, condensing down just enough to stand up on tiptoe, and force one semi-thick arm up into the pipe with his neck and head. He shrank a little more, until he had both arms in with his torso, then pulled himself North, Lucario settling in for the ride as she hugged his head and horns.

You're pretty handy, aren't you, she thought, chuckling internally.

"You think so?" Figment chuckled, in return; a soft blush burned against her fur as he climbed up, up, until they reached the cant point, wherein she climbed off onto the now-horizontal section, then waited to pull him up with her, when he forced himself small again. "I...thank you...I do what I can!"

Well, we're almost there, I think. Bit of a detour, but...I think we still head West at the nearest break, and we should be able to exit, then get into the main building through the air vents...

Figment's bulk blew up against the vent grating to the point of defeat, and it cracked and warped out, creating openings in between itself and the wall. The bulk shrank back, then a set of purple fingers wormed through, and forced the grate off entirely. Lucario squeezed past, then silently dropped down into a large warehouse. Figment tumbled down, somewhat less gracefully, blowing back up to a 10-foot ball of muscle and belly on landing.

"Ah! S-sorry!"

Lucario didn't respond, too focused on the surreal sight of the storage wing. Figment shook off the landing, dwindling back down to her size yet again, when he saw it for himself: the place seemed freshly swept, yet still devastated, cracked and split and half-shattered, from within. The walls were bent out and snapped, the top segments sunken awkwardly over the lower, gravity forcing them and the ceiling to settle all wrong overhead. Piles of bagged debris rested by a more or less intact shutter door.

Despite it all, Lucario seemed more focused on one further aspect, something more specific.

"What in the world happened, here?" Figment wondered.

They're gone, Lucario finally said, processing slowly. *All the pokeballs...A good portion were kept in storage, by R&D, but...they've been moved. Something happened here, and they moved them all. But where?*

Figment opened his mouth to comfort her, but stopped. Instead, he sniffed at the air, then made a little face. He sniffed louder, drawing Lucario's attention at last.

What is it?

"I smell them," Figment muttered, before his tail began beating around in a full wag. "That scent, that's...Cynder's flame attack! And Spyro, I can smell him, just faintly! Haha, they're okay! They must be here!"

Okay? Lucario thought, balking openly. *Figment, the entire area is trashed! Look! There was clearly a fight, or an explosion here, or something bad. Er, I don't mean to worry you, sorry...but—*

"Don't worry about them," Figment interrupted, smiling. "Those two are good friends, comrades even! They're tough! Whoever tried to stop them, if anyone did, is probably regretting it. If we can find them, I'm sure they'd help out, too!"

More allies with that much power couldn't hurt! Okay, then...can you sniff them out?

"I imagine I can—"

Before he could finish being clever, the shutter door at the side rattled, then stuttered to a slow open, struggling to manage its one function. Lucario was behind the massive pile of bags by the time Figment finished jumping at the sound of it all, and he hustled to follow along after.

He started to speak, but Lucario's paw met his muzzle, quieting him.

You're the one I have the link with, at the moment, Figment, so let me communicate, okay?

Figment blinked, then nodded slowly, as they watched on through a small gap between the bags. The door opened fully, or close to it, as late afternoon light spilled in, silhouetting a dragon-like shape. Several armed humans in tac gear stomped over to it, one using some sort of gun to motion it inside.

That Dragonite there? That's their top courier, Lucario explained, briskly. *She runs Devon's deliveries, mostly on her own. She's that fast, yes. We better sit tight here, and let whatever this is pass.*

"Welcome back," one soldier said to the Dragonite, as she stepped inside, then lifted her comically-large flight goggles up, just shy of two long antennae. "Mr. Stone says that something important was missing from the storage manifest, this morning, and he'd like to see you. Right now."

The Dragonite blinked, then coolly nodded her consent, following the smaller humans as they lead her into the next room.

"You know her?" Figment whispered.

I've seen her around, Lucario answered, perhaps a bit quickly. Let's get you to your friends, though! We'll get back up into the vents to move around, you do whatever you were going to do, to sniff them out!

"Right!"

"No, Steven is currently out at the moment," a serious voice began, drawing Figment's attention as they crawled through the vent nearest to a large sort of break room. He peered through the grating, spying two adult men in conversation—the kind of conversation that, going off every hint thrown, was not meant to be public. "Though I would imagine he'd want to know about the change up, sir."

"My son has his own business to attend to, Davis," the older of the two men said, sharply. He had a shock of gray hair and a smart business suit, the executive type. Figment knew a man in charge when he saw one, especially having been a resident of the Scientifica-Lucidus for so long. "Let's not interfere with that. This is purely company business, at hand, and we'll keep it that way. Besides, he has his full attention on today's exhibition match. He gets his funding for his hobbies, and he's happy. I'd rather have him rooting around for his stones and getting into matches, anyhow."

"...Yes, sir, of course."

What is it, Figment? Lucario asked, scooting back over to the dragon, watching on with him. Oh. Oh, that's Stone! The President of Devon! What's he doing over here? Why isn't this meeting in his office?

"Now, keeping focus: the subjects are all safe and accounted for? I don't want them harmed."

"No sir, they're all fine. Vitals are clean. We currently have Leon, Sgt. Anders' Charizard, and two foreign pokemon in custody. The latter two, we...we've never seen, before. No pokedex can identify them. It's the other two pokeballs that were smuggled out, this morning. Those are the missing parties. We're all but certain it's espionage."

Mr. Stone sighed, long and low, looking out through a large cafeteria window, out over the R&D labs. He turned back to Davis, and nodded.

"That's common, with new inventions, yes. We'll see what that Dragonite has to say about it, any deliveries outgoing were under her shift."

"She's on her way now, sir, under escort."

"This...is truly remarkable, Davis. Truly. We could change everything within a day's time, if this new operation runs as it should. It's imperative to have all of these newly-affected pokemon on board, for shipping. They're much too powerful now, clearly, to keep here, on land. Even Leon. That Dynamax energy...I saw the CC footage. He grew far too large, too fast. It's too wild. Better to keep this power to more...social uses."

"Infinity Energy, you mean."

Mr. Stone smiled, in a heavy way.

"It would be so much better, yes. I truly hope."

Figment looked to Lucario, confused.

I don't really understand this, myself, to be honest, she thought, shrugging lightly. Let's keep going, okay?

As they moved quietly overhead, bits of conversation followed up into the vents, after them:

"You've always been of great help to Devon, and we see you as a valued asset, yes...can you tell me, please...what *specific* pokeballs did you deliver, on your route, this morning?"

"Rrrr?"

The Dragonite's voice rumbled gently, unassuming. Lucario stopped, up ahead, and looked back—not at Figment, but at the voice itself.

"Relax, please. We just want to know what was taken out of the department, today. Alright? Now...who exactly did the deliveries go out to? Won't you explain, please? You are aware of your obligation to explain. If you don't..."

Figment saw Lucario's eyes widen.

"What?" he whispered.

I think she's in trouble, Lucario thought, gulping.

"You know her," Figment replied, staring. "Not just *of* her. You know her, personally?"

Slowly, fearfully, Lucario nodded.

She's...a comrade.

"What?" Figment balked, nearly swelling back up in the vents. "She...works with you!?"

Sort of. We should move, quickly. I shouldn't have thought anything, sorry.

"Well, is she in trouble?"

Probably...but we can't help her just yet. I didn't think she'd get caught this fast.

"Well, why is she working for Devon, then? Is she a double-agent? I've read so much about them, their exploits! Oh, how exciting!"

Not exactly, no, Lucario sighed, fidgeting. We can go over this later! Come on!

The sound of a pokeball snapping open rang out, followed by a bright flash of energy, and Lucario froze to the spot.

Oh, no...oh no! That sound...

"Was that one of those pokeballs?"

It's not an ordinary one...Devon uses a special type...it's the same kind you and those other pokemon were in. They aren't like the usual ones, you can go in and out of those. These...are prisons!

"He said 'shipping', and 'land', a moment earlier...the water, perhaps?"

Lucario's fearful stare hardened into a glare, before she took off, wriggling quickly down the vent shaft, and Figment stifled a surprised yelp, before scrambling after her.

"Left, up ahead," Figment whispered, over the slight sounds of her shuffling. "Uh...right, after! This right!"

Out popped the vent, and out the two dropped, landing softly (enough) in a large, low-lit room, with a row of massive transparent tubes lining the back wall. Gauges, knobs and lights all cast green-blue hues that warped and bounced against each cylinder, momentarily obscuring their contents.

Here?

"Here."

With the benefit of enough staring, the reflected lights began to parse from the insides, and Figment all-but slammed up against the glass of the first relevant cylinder.

"Cynder!"

Lucario stayed where she was, slack-jawed, at the sight of it—or, rather, of Cynder. Multiple tanks had been cosmetically fused together, in order to fit the 200-foot dragoness within them, laid out lengthwise, suspended in fluid. It took Figment a few moments to jog down past them all, in order to reach Spyro's single tank. As he stopped, Lucario ran past, to the tank next to that.

"Spyro! It's me, Fig! Do...ah, can't they hear?"

They're suspended, Lucario replied, breaking into his thoughts as gently as possible. *They're being prepared for shipping out, all of them.*

"Can we get them out, somehow?"

I know a good amount about this place, but I have no idea how to operate the machinery.

Her paw was on the tank containing a humongous orange dragon, easily as big as Cynder was. In fact, he had just as many tanks to him, joined together in a hurried, makeshift fusion. Figment saw the way she stared into it, and his heart sank.

"You know that one too, then."

She sighed aloud and nodded, looking down. He waited for some kind of follow-up, only nothing came his way.

"Alright, then," he continued. "Stand back. I'm going to get back up to full size, and—"

No, don't! These casings are impact-proof, no amount of force you put on it will break the material! They only break from within, and even that takes massive pressure to do. I've seen it myself.

Figment had already ballooned up to roughly twenty feet high, his belly bloated out tight against the side consoles, nearly tapping the opposing wall and all its buttons and lights. He snorted, then obediently forced himself back down, shaking his head from the repeated efforts.

Are you okay?

"It does take a bit of strain...but I've got it, now! Practice, and all, heh. So, how do we get them out, then? They're fast asleep, it seems. Chemical induced slumber, I suppose."

I'm not really sure. We have almost zero chance of waking them, from here.

"Right. In that case, drastic times..."

Figment reached into his strapped on pouch, pulling out several small orbs.

Candies?

"Candies! Now, where would the solution pump in from...there! Good, good!"

Lucario watched along, following Figment's stare up to a series of tubes, all of which fed into a large console at the corner of the room.

"That must be it! The filtration and exchange unit! We just need to introduce these to each line, as they pump into the tanks...see the water flow on each? It's timed individually."

You know about this sort of thing?

"I know enough, sure," Figment answered, grinning. "I've really read quite a bit, you know!"

At that, he crushed a candy on one hand, then one in the other, using all his strength. He snuck over to the filtration console, then snooped out a hatch, and nodded for Lucario to help force it open. It slid out with a pneumatic hiss of pressure, a long cylindrical tube, in which Figment dumped the first handful. They watched as it traveled into Cynder's feed, momentarily dyeing the solution. It faded out, and Figment repeated it for Spyro, as well.

This candy...it'll get them free? Lucario asked, watching in fascination.

"It should, yes!"

Then, please...send one to Leon. Er, the Charizard, there!

"Of course, if he's your friend!"

Lucario, once again, failed to respond. Still, despite the moment's doubt that stirred, Figment crushed another candy and dumped it into the feed, watching as it moved down the line to the Charizard's tanks, dissolving into the mixture around him.

Thank you, Figment, so much!

"Comrades help, hehe," the dragon chirped, sliding the tube casing back into the filtration console, and pressing it fully shut.

You think of me as a comrade, so quickly?

"Should I not?"

Haha, well. Fair point. So...what happens now?

Figment waited there, perfectly content to let the reaction explain for him—only, nothing much happened. The steady hum of machinery and the clicking of automated dials filled the lab once more, leaving them to an unsure quiet.

"Well, er," Figment stammered, cocking his head. "It should have started by now, that is a bit off. Is it too diluted by the solution, perhaps? Maybe...maybe I should add more—"

Lucario's ears perked high.

Figment, hide!

He did so, on reflex, ducking behind the console along with Lucario. The two slid around and hugged to its siding, just as a tall door slid open, sideways, and the soft tromping of boots filled the lab.

"Let's get them ready to move, we're doing this quickly," one voice said. "Mr. Stone wants this done as soon as possible, understand? We need them on that ship, and bound for Neo Mauville, no time wasted."

"Sir!"

Neo...

The word echoed through Figment's thoughts, as Lucario mulled it over, thinking. Her eyes widened right after, and her canine teeth revealed themselves in a grit. Figment stayed silent.

*Neo Mauville! They couldn't be...they're trying it **again!**?*

She turned to him, as the sounds of lifts rumbled into the lab from a larger cargo bay door.

We have to get on that boat!

"Tail whip," Drake flatly commanded; to Toothless, the mouth suggested, but the man's eyes demanded. "Let's have it."

For someone so very-much smaller than him to bark orders, polite or not, was nearly intolerable. The man seemed a tough sort, sure—but it hardly made him want to do whatever he said. Still, the contract was clear enough. The 50-foot colossus rolled his eyes, but stopped halfway around, when he heard Drake's throat clear.

"Alright, alright," Toothless relented, aloof and dull. He put his freshly humanized motor skills to work, spinning on his huge black heel, and sending his thick tail into a cruel arc that cracked the air. The sail-tip of his tail slashed overhead, kicking out a mean snap of wind that would have blown Drake's hat back, had the old dog not already had a hand on it.

"There you go," Toothless mumbled, before turning away, scratching indifferently at a fin. "Anything else?"

Drake cut such a glare that, despite the silence, Toothless found himself snapping to attention.

"Not the best attitude I've encountered," the old man growled, unimpressed. "Nor the best attack, even remotely. Your form's lax. Loose. Uncaring."

"I care about what I care about," Toothless countered, folding his monstrously thick arms. "If I don't care very much about this, then what of it? You could always let me go. I'm not here to embarrass you, you know."

"You won't."

Despite being so new to speech, there was something in the way that response carried that could have been taken multiple ways. Rather than bother with that, Toothless took the straight line:

"I'm very good at what I do, when I feel like doing it. If you want me to do this little show so bad, then I will. I'll do it to get to my friends."

"If you can be bothered to do it 'for your friends', then what good is a half-cocked effort?"

Toothless jerked back, as though something unpleasant had smacked him.

"Well—"

"TAIL WHIP!"

Toothless' mouth pursed flat, his green eyes going spherical, and on some latent reflex, the yelled-at beast twisted into a high kick, lashing his tail out at such speed that Drake staggered back on old sea legs, righting himself just in time, as a gale-force wind smashed past. A perfect landing, a half-twist, and Toothless was back in place, his posture flawless. His wings, having tucked for optimum aerodynamics, relaxed and whipped back into shape behind him. He looked up to the ceiling, eyes lidded coolly. He might have flicked them down, for a moment, to make sure Drake had seen.

The old man straightened back up, and tugged just once on his coat.

"...Okay."

Toothless closed his eyes and half-nodded, grinning wide.

"That was *marginally* better."

Two scaled brows furrowed low, up above. It was a lot more fun when his friends praised him. The sour old bird seemed a tougher crowd, by himself.

"Listen, up there. I ask for the best, for good reason. You strike this cocksure posture, and I want to see why. You have yet to explain yourself properly. Shouldn't be that hard, for you, should it?"

"Look, I'm a *giant*. I have claws and a tail, and fire breath. If *you* can't tell, then why explain?"

"I asked for a tail whip. Blaming isn't a legal move, in battle! This arena is about to open to the public, to the young and old alike. Hundreds and hundreds will flock here, to get a taste of real spirit! Human spirit! Pokemon spirit! They're coming to feel alive! What are you, dead?"

"I...no."

"No?"

Toothless snorted, flaring his pectorals out, with an annoyed grunt.

"NO."

"I think you've been talking back too much to listen. All I've been asking from you is to really see it, to see your spirit! Look at you, you're massive! You're built like a swarm of tanks!"

It suddenly became that much tougher for Toothless to maintain his annoyed look.

"Yet you're like a big cat! You're fine when things are easy and you look good, then turn disinterested or turn off when you aren't instantly rewarded! That's hardly a real champion, to me! Now, this is an exhibition match, a formality, a show, as you said. It's a benefit for a local mining charity, and it means a lot to Hoenn, to its history. Miners put everything into taking this hard land and making it—*making* it a real home! They have pride, they earned it. We aren't here to show off some prancing ponies, you understand? You're part of a great opportunity to really bring that spirit back, and you don't care. You think I'm just putting you down? Have you even once thought of what you could be, with just a little improvement?"

Finally, Toothless softened, and unfolded his arms.

"What I *could* be?"

"Oh, yes. I want you to be as great as you look. And I'm fool enough to think you can do it. I can't ask for you to improve by leaps and bounds in one afternoon session...but I can ask you to go into this event with her head on right. Can you do that?"

Toothless inhaled, loudly, held...then sighed, nodding. A smile came at the end.

"Y...yeah. Yes. I can do that."

"I know it."

"You've still got it, Drake, you really do."

The youthful voice that cut in made both Drake and Toothless turn, as a silver-blue-haired young man entered from the side portal, smart in a full suit ensemble. He brought both hands up from both pockets, and clapped a few times—unironically.

"Steven," Drake spoke, giving a firm, amicable nod. "Good to see you here, so early."

"I was hoping to be here earlier, but the charity had so many stone samples, it was hard to pull myself away," the youth admitted, stepping in, only to stop and gawk up at the towering black dragon. "Goodness! So, the mutterings I heard from the staff were true, there's a rare dragon-type here, after all! You really are a colossus!"

Toothless might have blushed. This kid was alright.

"I've actually been a whole lot bigger," he laughed, switching somewhat back to braggadocio for a moment. "Pleased to meet you, boy!"

"Steven Stone is hardly any boy," Drake corrected, sternly, making the giant clam up. "He's the son of Devon's President, as well as a pokemon champion. Let's have some respect, shall we?"

"Right, right," the huge dragon conceded. "Good to meet you."

Throughout, Steven was staring up at him, unblinking.

"Wow, even speech, as well. Good speech, at that. This really is something! He'll surely be brought up in the match, I take it?"

"Against you, I might need to, hah!" Drake said, actually laughing. In the short time he had known him, Toothless realized that was a first.

"We're going up against him?"

"A champion, yes. And an avid stone collector and traveler, as well."

"Huh. Well, it's a pleasure. I'll go eas—I mean, I, uh, look forward to a great match!"

"Likewise!" Steven offered, cheerfully overlooking things. "I've got a surprise for the match, myself, truth be told. This just got all the more exciting, didn't it?"

"Hmm. Here's to a stellar match, then!" Drake replied, his arms folded. "We'll see you back here, within the hour!"

Steven took another fawning look at Toothless, then nodded, and turned to leave for his dressing room. Drake looked ready to lash the dragon with a few more lectures, but restrained himself, and sighed instead.

"Just, don't forget what I told you, alright? I'll be with you, throughout."

He held the pokeball back up, and once again, Toothless quietly fussed, knowing what was coming next.

Steven popped his back with a little grunt, then calmly unpacked his case on his dressing room table. The case snapped open, and the young man regarded its insides curiously.

"This really will be something," he chuckled, earnestly eager.

The fans piled in, in droves, packing the Ever Grande City arena to capacity in record time. The ads, the coverage, the two competitors, locking horns—all of it had driven the populace into a frenzied anticipation for a legendary match, and they had done their part in arriving. When the lights died low, the audience roared with such force and joy that the spotlight had to put all its focus on the announcer, lest they forget he was even there, trying to talk over them:

"Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome, welcome, to the major event! Yes, folks, we have a monster lineup for you, this time and this time, only! A one-of-a-kind bash, the likes of which you will never witness in real time, again! Get ready, because tonight, it's...Drake!"

The crowd bellowed, as the spotlight zoomed over, in time to catch the old man's entrance on the far right of the arena floor.

"Versus...the one, the only..."

The spotlight whipped fervently across to the far left, where a set of curtains parted, leaving the darkened doorway open, like a mouth gawking in disbelief, awaiting the entrance of...

"Steven...Stoooooooooone!"

The crowd went from bellowing to hurricane, as the youth stepped into the spotlight, waving humbly, all smiles and appreciation.

"It's classic battle rules, tonight, with one major twist: both participants have altered their lineups, slightly! We might even see someone battling, out of their type! Who knows!?"

Drake nodded over to Steven, who cordially nodded back.

"Trainers, ready! Begin, with your first selections!"

"He'll begin with one of his Steel-types, for sure," Drake murmured, explaining things to the specialized pokeball nearby, so that Toothless could hear it better. "I'm all dragon-types. Likely, he'll start on a solid showcase selection, something that can handle a dragon-type's heavier attacks, like his

Armaldo, or Aggron—"

"I choose you—go, Aggron!"

Toothless just listened on, inside the ball, as the crowd roared on with every chosen fighter, with every sound of fire and steel clashing. The more he listened, the more he found himself pressing his fins to the side, to hear better. The more he listened, the more fired up he became. Whatever Aggron looked like, it was going up against a 'Shelgon', and the battle wound everyone up so bad that Toothless was almost trying to pry the ball open, to see it for himself.

By the time Shelgon fell, he was fighting to imagine it all; Drake called on something called a 'Flygon', to which he heard Steven counter with a 'Skarmory'. The idea that such a tough bird as the old man could be pushed back by such a young man truly drove it home—this Steven must have really known what he was doing!

There had been fights and battles, back home, in his world, sure. Quite a few. Yet, the idea of some gladiatorial game of conquest had never really entered into the mindset of dragonkind, in Berk. Usually, that was for whelps and the like, for babies, playing together. This, however, actually sounded pretty exciting.

When Skarmory locked in battle with Flygon, Toothless started rocking the ball with his wagging. Each attack shook the arena, to the point where even he felt it, which only furthered his excitement. He imagined Spyro and him, shoulder to shoulder, blasting fire and punching through foes, with Figment cheering on or handing out refreshments, the way he heard staff members doing. That seemed about right.

Suddenly, something called a 'tie' was called, and before Toothless' confusion cleared, the ball opened, and out he came, with a rush of energy and motion; when he formed, at full size, he could see over the arena stand walls. He could see the massive crowd, some below him, some rising up above. All of them went silent, in abject awe. Then, the cheering hit, so furious, so renewed, so awesome, that even Toothless winced a bit, his fins dipping back defensively. Not to say he was upset. Not at all.

Now, he *really* saw himself and Spyro there, soaking up the attention.

"And I'll call my fighter, as well," Steven shouted, via his attached microphone (Toothless just thought he had a seriously strong voice). "I choose you!"

Toothless froze in place, his every huge muscle tight, as another specialized ball appeared in the youth's hand, just like his. It snapped open, and after the flash of energy cleared, a humongous white dragon appeared, fur and scales, with long bat-like ears, and a pink tipped snout. His bulky muscles were impressive, though not anywhere near as massively overgrown as Toothless'.

"B...Bartok!?" Toothless gasped, as the gigantic dragon-bat shook his head sleepily, then looked at him—rather, *down* at him. Once everything settled, it was clear: Bartok was big. Exceedingly big. He loomed to nearly the lighting rigs, even on all fours, outsizing even Toothless with no trouble.

Yet, that wasn't what made Toothless gasp. It was the fact that Bartok, still coming to, was already rumbling all over, deeply, heavily, his huge body groaning with a sudden release of pent-up, stored power. His body shook and swelled out hungrily, almost furiously, his clawed feet spreading out

bigger and wider over the arena. His haunches burst out larger, his neck swelling and lengthening as he fluttered his pink eyes sluggishly, then moaned and blew up another ten feet in size, then another, still.

It was clear, what Figment had said before, at Baba Yaga's home: all the held-off growth from Bartok's potion was finally kicking in, and he was instantly getting bigger.

Much...*much* bigger!

12.

"Were you still growing, after you left with the antidote?"

"Yeah..."

"Then, the moment you leave here...you may keep getting bigger, on your own. For all I saw, that potion is unbelievably powerful. You could outgrow us all in short order, unless you get a dose of antidote, yourself."

"Oh, no, not dat. I was kinda hopin' we were done talking..."

Figment's warning to Bartok swam like a shark through Toothless' thoughts, and the nearer it came, the choppier the waters got. At an impressive fifty feet in height, the black dragon had been ready to punt any opponent across the pokemon arena, the moment it emerged. Yet here was Bartok, just as dragon as he, only *considerably* bigger—and that unwanted gap was widening, fast.

"H...haaaah, geez," Bartok sneered, as if ready to sneeze, before his body exploded out again, bursting from one hundred feet to 130 in one hot, billowing gush. Fur and scale stretched out in an expanding wave of pressure that funneled down into his feet and hands, making them balloon wider across a fissuring floor. If he had been asleep, this was his wake-up call—plus everyone present.

"B-Bartok!" Toothless growled, waving with massive arms. "Bartok, stop! It's me, Toothless, down here!"

Over one hundred and fifty feet of bulging, broadening dragon-bat tensed into a wobble as Bartok's muscles flared, bristling his pelt until it fluffed. Two pink eyes squinted out over a growing muzzle and as he attempted an answer, the shuddering doubled, blowing back into his body as it exploded to 200 feet, then 240, with two straining throbs. His tail snaked across the floor, squeaking and squiggling over the polish, swelling so thick around that fleeing referees proved unable to scale it to reach the exits. A few were scooped into the warm membrane of his wings, some sliding back down into the bulk of his sides. His muzzle rammed out into Toothless, bowling him back as Bartok huffed hot into his belly and chest, still shaking with power, still surging even *bigger*.

"Tuh-Toothless," he rumbled, gulping, as Toothless clung to more and more and more muzzle against him. "Huh-hu-I can't...can't stop it, there, then! ***I can—***"

Suddenly, there was over three hundred feet of him blowing back through the far bleachers, smashing them into pulp as spectators hollered and shoved their way into the only exit aisles on that side. His muzzle crammed into, then up along the opposing bleacher, Toothless' body smashing through row after row as he rode the surge.

"Calm down!" Toothless gasped, as Bartok's growing chin crushed the air out of him. He beat his wings uselessly, then scabbled to the left and tumbled loose, letting the huge dragon grow and smash flat into the as the arena shook. "T-try and relax! Where's Baba-Yaga? I t-thought she had the antidote!"

"Get out!" a voice called, down below.

"Huh-huh-H-I dunno!" Bartok wailed as he closed his eyes and bit his lip, the spilled even bigger, even heavier, filling the arena entirely. **"I j-just woke up, fer cryin'...out...looooud!"**

Again, Bartok trembled, then detonated in size, blowing up against crushed bleachers, walls, scaffolding, lighting rigs, monitors, *everything*. Paws as big as houses stubbornly ballooned even bigger against his bulging chest and shoulders, his long neck forced in against his booming back muscles as he whined and shook all over, the power increasing, his growth escalating furiously.

"Get out, y'idiot!"

Toothless finally saw him emerge from Bartok's tufts—the old man! He was but a dot, a flea jostling about on some titan...but there he was, just the same, fighting his way over.

"W-what are you still doing here!?" Toothless roared as he struggled to move between the dying wall behind him and the living wall, in front. From out the front popped Drake, the hardened gym leader scaling up onto Toothless' giant chest, fingers tickling as they found gaps in the scales. "I'm a tank, I'll be alright! You're not, you won't b-be!"

"Not leaving ya!" Drake barked, just as Bartok's 500-foot body compacted violently tight, untold muscles tensing in with all their might, then billowed uncontrollably against them, against everything. Walls segmented, webbing and warping, as too much dragon inflated everywhere, until the fleeing masses out in the adjoining hallway were interrupted by a surge of white scales blasting through as Bartok grew, and grew, and grew, and *grew*.

Perhaps the gesture was noble; Toothless might have been struck by this old bird sticking it out with him, in a calmer setting. As it was, there was a bit too much going on—a bit too much *Bartok*.

"S-stay put in there!"

"Where?" Drake yelled, confused, only for Toothless' thick finger to push the man deep within the crease of his pectorals, for safekeeping.

As he did, Bartok's heartbeat boom-boom-boomed heavily in a growing chest, the gigantic dragon becoming even greater and stronger as his pink eyes rolled back, then closed in a wince as he doubled his size *again*. Walls blew apart, throwing drywall and beams and splinters and glass and molding, tiles shattering away in a blooming hilltop of white bulk. The ceiling tented up, then cracked, letting a vast wave of fur and scales billow up through it like a sundered egg.

In less than a minute's time (44 seconds, specifically), Bartok had ballooned larger than the entire stadium. His bulky arms blew out of both sides, a contrail of destruction angling along behind them, before his tail whipped free over the cliff on which it had proudly sat.

The last vestiges of its shell crumbled away as Bartok bellowed, his head thrown back, his neck bulging into a near-sphere against his tilting chin, his body bursting more and more hungrily massive. Over 1,000 feet tall and half a mile long, he overtook the back ridge of the cliff itself, booming up against a setting sun. His throbbing girth trembled worse, still, then ballooned even larger, his building-sized claws crushing down over more and more rock and tree, spreading in size like a wildfire.

Toothless, himself a giant, found it harder and harder to keep his head above the canopy of Bartok's fur as he stuck close, less than toy-sized to him now. There had to be a way to shrink him.

There wasn't.

Baba-Yaga would know how!

She wasn't here.

Then, what was Toothless supposed to do about this?

"There!"

Toothless perked his fins, looking down into his own pectorals. Drake was waving wildly for his attention, pointing out over the great plains of Bartok's fur.

"THERE!"

Toothless squinched, then saw a single glint of light over and over, signaling, out in the jungle of fluff. Clinging to a single, ever-growing tuft of ivory was a minute speck, and it was reflecting light off the sunset, again and again.

"What—"

"That's a gym leader badge," Drake shouted, it being the only way to compete with the constant groan and swell of Bartok's huge body. "That's him! That's Steven, out there!"

Without another word, Toothless was on the move. The dragon's wings, finally free, whipped open and let the passing winds accept them. They closed again, given they weren't strong enough, since Bartok was blocking most of the wind with his girth, and instead changed tacks. Drake watched the creature think, then shift and start scaling the mounds of fur, hand-over-fist.

"You aren't—"

"Winds are too weak!" Toothless growled as he grabbed his way along Bartok's growing form. "We'll get to him faster, this way!"

Of course, the doing was less easy than he might have hoped: Bartok's body, hearing the plan, decided to playfully expand even bigger, right after. More and more bat-dragon spilled out, the landscape on which he moved swelling wider and higher as Bartok moaned way up in the skies, blowing up to a staggering 2,000 feet in height. Muscles blew up into newborn ridges and canyons overhead, Toothless' feet pulled differing ways at once. In response Toothless let his wings back out

and used them as sails, flapping in time with his leaping, to make up the distance.

The city below was in more of a panic than Toothless as the remains of the mighty gymnasium vanished under a massive surge of hot dragon-bulk. The walkways down the cliff to Ever Grande were brimming with the populace, their exodus ongoing as they scattered away. Even from the city streets the great pillar of fur and scale grew bigger and bigger, towering higher into darkening skies.

Bartok, now half a mile tall and over a full mile long, relentlessly grew onward. His tremendous spire-claws dug into the cliff, unable to help it as he shook harder and harder, his muscle spasms creating a quake down below. He grit his huge teeth and snorted, shaking his head, as if trying his best to deny the growth—only to huff, then cry out as he rumbled deep within, and billowed even *BIGGER*...

Remarkably, Toothless still managed to compensate, as each follicle of fur swelled from a reed to a tree, thickening larger and higher all around him. Toothless himself was now a flea, if even that. By the time they reached Steven, the tuft had bulged too big around for his grip, leaving him dangling and bobbing as he clung to the tip of the monstrous strand.

"Oh, the other dragon, t-thank goodness!" Steven shouted, keeping as much composure as one of his breeding could. "I...I promise, I didn't k-know he could use Growth!"

"It's not an ability!" Toothless sighed, as even he had to look up, the strand of fur too big for him to reach. Instead, he grabbed its base and began to pull, forcing it and Stone Jr. lower to him. "This isn't a pokemon, he's a dragon! From another world, like I am!"

"I...I see!" Steven replied, loudly, as Toothless brought the strand low enough that the human could slip off, and *thump* down onto his huge head.

"Glad you believe me," Toothless boomed, the long follicle bulging bigger in his grip, before he let it whip away. "Saves us time!"

"Well, he is massive...and you can talk..."

"Get him down here, already!" Drake yelled.

"Is that...Drake?" Steven asked as Toothless let him climb carefully onto a free palm, wherein he offered the kid down to his pectorals. "You're okay!"

"I had a dragon of my own, heh," the old dog laughed, rapping his knuckles on Toothless' scale.

As they reunited the landscape of Bartok's body began rumbling even worse than before, so much so that Toothless teetered and pitched to keep his balance.

"Just how all-fired big is he supposed to get?" Drake yelled, as the trembling increased.

"I don't know," Toothless gulped, as Bartok's fur began to outgrow them fully, engulfing the trio entirely in fuzz. "If my friends are right...he might not stop!"

"Those friends you were so keen to get to, right," Drake replied, thinking. "Would they know what to do about all this nonsense!?"

"They would know better than me, I can tell you that much!"

"Wait," Steven said, patting himself over. "Wait, I know!"

Toothless had trouble seeing, granted, but Drake watched cautiously as the young man pulled the same pokeball out from his jacket, grinning.

"You think he'll fit?" Drake asked.

"What's he have?" Toothless asked, before his fins shot upright. "That ball! Of course!"

"It's worth a try, isn't it?" Steven asked.

"Don't ask me, just throw the thing, kid! Better to know now!"

Steven wound back and hurled the ball so that it bounced off one of Bartok's street-wide scales, between follicles. It snapped open. For a moment, there was only the whipping winds and the mean rumbling of Bartok's body under them before a pink light finally bled out, consuming the behemoth entirely. It had taken several seconds' time to do what anyone in this world knew was immediate—Bartok had simply grown *that* big. Over 2 miles of towering bat-dragon finally vanished into the ball, which snapped shut...then promptly plummeted down to the crushed-in cliff.

With nothing between them and the same, the trio found themselves in a free-fall. Toothless's hands clutched protectively over his chest muscles, his wings whipped free, and he glided out beyond, the winds carrying him over the ocean's breadth.

"The ball!" Steven cried out, as they watched it thump down on the ruins of the gym, lost there. "We need to get back there! We can't let anyone get that pokeball!"

"Right!" Toothless bellowed, not really meaning to. His wings beat hard against the wind, and he propelled them all back down towards the cliff.

Toothless lowered both Steven and Drake down onto the ruins, careful and slow.

"You did okay, considering," Drake grumbled, though not sourly. Toothless blinked a few times, then slowly worked up a wide grin.

"You thought I was going to let you get crushed? How low is your opinion of me?"

"Not so low, now."

There went the smile.

"Found it!"

Steven returned, waving the ball about. Drake wandered over, just as that same ball shook angrily, tossing and jerking about in the boy's hands.

"Whoa!"

"It's fightin' back pretty hard," Drake said, knitting his brows even lower than usual. "Can it hold 'em, you think?"

"I...I don't know..."

Toothless thudded over, and opened his hand, showing palm.

"Gimme."

Steven looked it over, before the ball's shaking worsened, prompting him to do as told. Into Toothless' vast palm it went. One gigantic hand closed over the other, in an attempt to form a seal.

"Somehow, I don't think this will really hold," Toothless huffed, looking about as he held it in both hands. "For all we know, Bartok's still growing bigger, inside..."

"Well, we can't just open it!" Steven groaned. "What do we do? We, ah, could contact my father! He might have something we can use, he did send me the new ball, in the first place..."

"Can you ring him up?" Drake asked.

"Well, I can, if my phone is still—"

At that, quite out of nowhere, the ball went still. Toothless cocked his head, then gingerly lifted one hand up to reveal the pokeball, still and quiet. Dead, even.

"It stopped," he rumbled, sniffing it over curiously. "Maybe his growth spurt ended!"

Before the others could respond, the ball snapped open, making even Toothless lurch away fearfully. He winced and waited, then looked to his open palm. The ball was open, and no sign of Bartok was there. He might have gone wide-eyed from the shock and bafflement of it all, but there was another, better reason for Toothless' expression, one that the humans couldn't understand, even if he lowered his hand to show them.

It was the momentary sight of a red portal, within it, blinking out of existence just as quickly as it had been spotted.

EARLIER

As soon as the ship departed, they moved.

Lucario crept out of the loading bay holds so quietly that Figment would have lost her, had he blinked or looked away. In the rush to scamper through the vent system, just to reach the loading dock in time to sneak onboard, he had nearly blown back up in size three times. Turns out, panicking and rushing was detrimental to maintaining his hold on imagining himself smaller. Once the Devon workers had finished mechanically loading Spyro, Cynder and the 'Charizard' onto the ferry, however, they found enough of a window to slip in before it all closed up, and took to water.

Okay, we're clear, Lucario thought, grinning slightly. I think they trucked them into the back section of the ferry. It's a big boat, so we'd better move quickly. I don't think it's a very long trip, before they arrive at the rig.

"The rig?" Figment whispered, thinking. "As in...oil deposits? But, we're over the sea...goodness! Manned offshore rigs! Brilliant!"

It's more terrible than brilliant, Lucario corrected, patiently. She turned to Figment and placed a gentle paw on his shoulder, making sure his eyes met hers. Understand, Figment, this isn't for oil. Neo Mauville...er, Mauville, was a specialized rig meant to cultivate something called Infinity Energy. It's a tremendous power source, and Devon was hellbent on creating a steady supply of it...

"A...alright," Figment murmured, listening intently.

But Figment, that power, it...we all thought it was revolutionary, at the time...a-and it was...but the price was terrible. Beyond terrible. It...required a source, and that source was...pokemon. Their energy, itself. Their life force.

"It...exhausted them?"

The look Lucario gave him made Figment freeze. It wasn't an angry one, or a scolding or contemptuous look, as though he was some ignoramus or fool. It was complete, iron-cold *regret*.

...No.

"Oh," Figment started, before pulling back. "Oh! No!"

We need to stop this, sabotage it. Now. They suffered a blowout before, and the entire rig was damaged beyond repair, so I thought at the time...

"You did it, then," Figment said, slowly, letting pieces fall where they ought.

*I **loved** being at Devon, she admitted, hanging her head. I loved the progress, the camaraderie, the family. I was so happy there, Figment. I was contributing, **I belonged**.*

The urge to save Spyro and Cynder, to have them back beside him was suddenly so overwhelming that Figment wasn't breathing. It wouldn't come to him. For a creature out of time, out of worlds, the idea of his own comrades, his *family* returning—was suddenly maddening.

I was part of security here. Under a supervisor, Jason Anders. Leon and I were a team, his team. Top-notch in every aspect. Our clearance was so high up, we were moved over for a stint on the construction of Mauville, off the coast of Hoenn. I was so excited. I...I'm sorry, we don't have time for this, do we. We need to get moving, forgive me.

"Leon...the Charizard in the holding tank?"

Yes. And we can save him, and your friends, if we move!

"So, you know this ferry, then? You know where to go?"

Well...this is a new model, actually. I have some ideas, but-

The screech of an alarm sounded nearby, interrupting. A red light soaked the bay, casting them into darkness, otherwise.

"Wh-what's that for?" Figment asked, blowing up a foot in size from shock.

I don't know!

"Alert, alert—containment breach in Sector H, aft...containment breach in Sector H, aft...all personnel to security, repeat..."

It's...not for us?

Figment put it together first.

"Goodness...the candies!"

Following the swarm of guards proved easy enough, considering they weren't bothering to look for stowaways; what awaited them all inside of the back holding bay was enough to make Figment sympathize right away with their priorities.

"What do you mean, they're growing!?" one officer shouted, shoving a scientist aside to rifle through paperwork. "That's not possible!"

"See for yourself!" another shot back, motioning toward the three gigantic holding tanks. Each one was filled to the brim with Spyro, Cynder and Leon, all of whom were slumbering as they ballooned bigger, so much so that the canisters themselves were starting to crack slightly, from within. "They're designed to nullify exterior pressure, not interior! At this rate, they'll break!"

"And their bodies—"

Spyro was bigger, certainly, but his canister was the least affected; Cynder, however, was becoming a complete leviathan, in hers. All two hundred feet of her heaved out, her stupendous muscles erupting even larger in fits of growth. Her breasts pressed tight to the casing, forcing the upper curves to pinch up against her trapped chin. Her shoulders striated deeper, tighter, lines of definition bunching and swelling into each other. Her wings flattened between the tank lining and her own erupting back bulk, her thighs exploding bigger and stronger, leaving no room for anything else as she became impossibly over-built. The case snapped a bit further, making everyone scatter back nervously as the sirens blared incessantly on.

Leon wasn't as big, but his muscles were mimicking hers as volcanic bursts of power blew his frame wider and thicker. Shelf-like pectorals boomed forth, stretching his scales, his lats ballooning bigger under swelling triceps and blimp-sized shoulders. His entire body shifted, the feral features of a round belly and haunches pulling down, narrowing into humanoid legs, as knees clicked into place and calves separated and bulged to proper form. The hulking Charizard twitched, still asleep in the mixture, but a smile formed and wouldn't leave as his bulk continued to inflate larger and larger, filling the tank

at a steady, hungry pace.

"Leon...he looks as humanoid as the other two, now!"

"Are they influencing his genetic makeup?"

"How?"

"Look, I don't know! We have to move them!"

"Where!?! These are the biggest tanks!"

They're working! Lucario thought, her paws over her small muzzle and mouth. *I can't believe it! Oh, Leon, he looks...aheh, er...j-just what candy types did you put in there?*

"Well, it was dark, I wasn't really sure," Figment whispered, as they watched from behind a large crate. "I just went with what was in my hands, heh!"

"What are you doing here?"

The guard's voice came so sharp, so sudden, that Figment blew up another two feet in size, leaving him only a foot smaller than he. The armed human raised an electrically-charged baton to strike, when Lucario headbutted up under his chin, staggering him.

Run!

Figment stumbled back as the ship pitched; by the time he looked up, Lucario was fighting off five armed guards, all at once. Truth be told, she was doing a bang-up job. Literally.

"Hang on!" Figment roared as he let himself grow up to an impressive 12 feet. He stormed heavily over, lifting the entire crate, and swinging it wild into the guards, knocking several of them back. Lucario only started a tiny bit at the sight of Figment, bigger again, before she chuckled internally and nodded.

Right, you're gigantic, I forgot!

"Don't get me thinking that too much!" he laughed, before a smoke grenade popped off, hissing to a skid between them. Figment shoved Lucario back from the clouds as it engulfed him.

Figment!

"Get to the vents, go! I'll be alright! Here!"

At that, a single candy flew out from the cloud, which Lucario caught in a well-trained paw. She looked at it, then back to Figment. Before she could protest, another wave of armed guards came tearing through the bay door, and she bolted off down an adjacent hall.

As the tanks cracked nearby, and as the scientists, officers and guards all swarmed in towards him, Figment let his self-control slip and felt himself swell up, up, and up. His belly expanded back out

into a great stretchy sphere of scales, his feet swelling over the floor.

"Let's see how you all like...t-this..."

As he ballooned up to a whopping 33 feet, Figment suddenly teetered in place. His eyes rolled back and he fell over with a crash, out cold from the knockout gas.

Lucario was in the vent so fast that the grating was shut in less than a second, leaving the guards to chase down the hallway, after nothing. She caught her breath as she waited, perking her large ears high. Silence, at last (minus the whine of the alarm, further off).

Do I take this now? she wondered, looking the strange candy over curiously. She sniffed at it, and grinned. It did smell divine! It nearly found its way into her mouth, just from want of its sweetness, before she pulled back, chiding herself. *No, no. These are serious business, I saw that for myself. I hope Figment's okay. I hope they can break out of those tanks, they seemed ready to burst...*

Lucario held on to the candy as she looked both ways down the darkened vent shaft, then picked a direction and moved.

Figment awoke to find his bulky arms behind him, having blown back up to his full 90-foot size, his belly gargantuan. He rested awkwardly in one of the holds, his massive wrists lashed to the wall mounts, as though he were a secured cargo load. That he pulled with that much strength and still remained fastened was a credit to the engineers of this world.

Still, he was smarter.

"Whew, that was unpleasant," Figment sighed, shaking his head to clear the webs. "Lucky for me, I'm so very small...so very, very regular..."

"Rurr?"

The voice cut through his concentration, just as Figment had shrunken down a few feet, leaving him to billow right back up to full size again. He looked around, confused, having some trouble seeing over his own massive belly and chest.

"H...hello?"

"Rurru!"

Straining, Figment leaned over toward the sound enough to see past himself and spot a smaller dragon with long sloping antennae, a satchel, and a set of aviator-style goggles on, resting atop two big, gentle eyes. Female, from the look, as well as the sound.

"Oh, hello!"

The dragon beamed, nodding 'hello' back up to him. Her thick orange tail swished.

"Rrrr!"

"I beg your pardon?" Figment asked, suddenly embarrassed. He noticed that her arms had been lashed to another section of the same wall. "Ah...a fellow guest, I take it? Are you a pokemon, too?"

"Rurrurrur!"

A nod followed.

"Ah, good to meet you! I'm Figment. Pleasure!"

The dragon smiled, then sagged a bit, her bindings groaning as she slouched.

"Oh...yes, I suppose we are a bit inconvenienced, aren't we," Figment chuckled, trying to cheer her up some. "If it helps, I came with a friend of yours! A, uh...Lucario?"

The dragon bolted upright, her mouth open. But, when it closed, her eyes furrowed into a glare.

"She...*is* your friend?"

The dragon blushed, and turned away some, her mouth creasing unhappily. Perhaps he had committed something of a faux pas.

"Well, either way...I can still get us free. How does that sound?"

"R."

"I ah, I'm afraid I don't really speak the language..."

A thought occurred. Figment stopped, mused, and then smiled.

"Though, I imagine I could understand you just fine, now...yes, I can understand!"

"You can?" the dragon asked, looking up in renewed wonder at him.

"Indeed! Certainly much easier, this way. Watch this!"

Concentrating, Figment began to dwindle smaller, and smaller, his lashings losing hold of his wrists. She did indeed watch, her antennae bobbing up high in stupefaction.

"H-how are you doing that?" she asked, tilting her head. "What kind of dragon type can control their size like that!? Amazing!"

"Heh, well," Figment huffed, straining to compact himself down to 70 feet, then 60. "I-it does take a bit of effort, I won't lie...but I can have us free shortly! Just wait!"

"But...we can't leave yet," she sighed. "I can't leave yet. Leon is on board!"

"That Charizard? Lucario wanted to save him, too, as well as my friends...they're all trapped

here on this ferry! Well, no...I have several other dragon friends, too, and I don't know where they are...a-anyway, I'll help you, don't worry!"

"Lucario came back," the dragon murmured, struck. "She came here, she's on board, now?"

"She showed me how to get here, yes, we arrived together..."

By now, Figment was down to 40 feet.

"Well...even if she is...Leon's the priority! She probably just has her own selfish reasons for being here, anyhow."

"I thought you two were a sort of team," Figment offered, reaching 30 feet. "She made it sound like such, at least. I would have figured you two were working together, perhaps, throwing wrenches and the like into Devon, in secret."

"Out of obligation to the past, only," she muttered, glowering. "Only because she was so precious to Leon, and Leon is...precious, to me..."

Thirty feet deflated down to twenty.

"So, you were *never* friends?" Figment pressed. She fidgeted in her restraints, looking away.

"We were, before she abandoned us. Those two were the golden ones. Unbeatable as a team. I ran the delivery routes for Devon, so I saw them almost every day. Of course, we became friends. It was great, up until *she* started barking about what Devon was doing, about Infinity Energy. It was horrifying to hear, it's true, but Leon wouldn't accept it. No, maybe that's not right...he understood...but when she wanted to leave, to break away from Anders, he wouldn't go..."

Figment listened on, reaching 10 feet in height, small enough to slip free, and move over slowly towards her.

"I don't know if that broke her heart or not, but when she left, I *know* it broke his. I stayed on to stay close to Leon, console him...but I couldn't reach him. He was all work, after that. Before I could resign my post, though, she came back with an offer: if I helped her bring Devon down, if I could help her destroy what had such a hold on Leon, maybe he would snap out of it..."

"So, you helped," Figment finished, putting a soft hand on her shoulder. She sighed, then nodded, grudgingly. "Meaning, you stole those new pokeballs. My friends were likely warped into some of them, which is why I mention them..."

"Warped?"

"I can explain better, later, heh," Figment offered, undoing her bindings quickly. "I'll make up a portal, and we can move around a little more freely, get all our friends out of here, before we get to this Neo Mauville place—"

"Neo Mauville?" the dragon gasped, terrified. "They're continuing that awful project?"

"Afraid so. Now, I'll just recall the area where they were being held, and open a smaller portal there—oh, wait, I can't go without the candy!"

He checked and found, to his relief, that the strap and bag were still on him, albeit very, very tightly stretched over his huge shoulders.

"The humans tried to remove it from you, a moment before you woke up," she explained. "But you were too big, and too high up. They went to go get a ladder, I think, so whatever you do—"

"Not much time, understood! Thank you, miss, ah..."

"Dragonite," she replied, shaking Figment's larger hand gratefully.

"Charmed! Now, hang on...I'm about to show you how my friends and I travel between worlds!"

Still processing everything, Dragonite observed in stunned silence as Figment concentrated once more, hard. He strained, then snapped back to attention, grinning proudly.

"There, I felt it! Okay, lets..."

He looked around, along with Dragonite. Nothing.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"That...is rather odd," Figment snorted, cocking a brow. "I know it formed...where is it?"

He followed its signature as best he could, moving past the holding bay, over to a cluster of pokeballs strapped together in bulk, in a series of pallets. One in particular glowed red from within, causing Figment to carefully collect it between two giant fingertips.

"What in the world is this?" he wondered, before the ball snapped open, revealing a small red portal—the very same kind that had brought them here. "It...formed inside of here? How?"

Figment's line of query was cut short as a familiar white mass bulged through, filling the ball.

"B...Bartok!" Figment gasped, only to see the small white bat-dragon start to violently rumble, in a way Figment knew all too well. "OH, GRACIOUS—"

Immediately, Figment snapped the ball shut again, just as an explosive burst of growth rattled inside of it, barely containing what Figment correctly surmised was a tremendous spurt.

"W-what was that?" Dragonite asked, as Figment forcibly held the rumbling ball between his fingers. "That red thing...was that your portal?"

"Well, not quite the same portal I meant to make, no...but yes! But why is it inside this pokeball? Why did Bartok come through it? Was he...in...another one!? Good gracious, he must have been! These pokeballs here, they look different from the ones Lucario and I rescued before...tell me, those balls you stole earlier...did they look like these?"

"Y-yes, they're the same, they're new models, super-durable..."

"Okay! Then, let me try something else..."

Figment strained again, opening another portal. Instead of a fresh one appearing there, in the bay, the next pokeball on the pallet glowed bright red, between its crevices. The rumbling of Bartok's contained growth left the ball in Figment's grip, and the nearest pokeball began to rumble, instead, prompting Figment to rush over and grab it, to hold it shut.

"Hah...incredible!"

"What is it?"

"I think...yes, I think...the portal I opened in the last world...it's different, so I can't summon it outside of these pokeballs! If it was the entry source for all of us travelers, at the moment it was created...its energy...is confined to these interiors! They're like their own worlds, so...it only operates therein! Which means...Bartok had been in one...alright, one more experiment, then we move!"

"Uh," Dragonite began, only to back away nervously as Figment concentrated once again.

The red glow left the new pokeball and returned back to the old one, seemingly on command. Figment grabbed that one back up, laughing in bewilderment and understanding, alike.

"All travel has to be done through pokeballs! Which, heh...means I would..."

Figment suddenly sagged lower as the logic presented itself.

"I would...have to get all of us...into a pokeball, to leave here..."

The rumbling in the original ball grew worse and worse, drawing his focus back to it.

"I'm a bit lost," Dragonite rumbled, wringing her flat, clawed hands together.

"Oh, I know! I'm sorry, one last thing," Figment sighed, poking his tongue out in concentration. "My friend in here, Bartok, is likely about to explode to such a prodigious size that he'll burst out of the pokeball, and overwhelm the entire ferry...he's been holding off the effects of a potion so powerful, I fear it's making him grow, nonstop..."

"WHAT!?" Dragonite roared, backing away. "W-well, stop him! Please!"

"Not to worry," Figment soothed, smiling. "There's a major advantage, we've just been handed!"

"How!?! You can't warp anywhere, and the minute you let him out, he'll get super-colossal and sink us all into the sea!"

Figment chuckled, his tail wagging.

"Time for a science experiment! Oh, if Blair could see this part!"

"Who?"

Figment closed his eyes and focused; just as the pokeball shuddered and bulged out, creaking to the breaking point, that same red glow raced along the creases, then vanished. The ball sighed back to normal size and Dragonite went slack-jawed at the sight of the red glow passing to one pokeball on the pallet...then to the next...and the next, and the next. In seconds it had sped up into a ruby streak, as the glow sequentially raced through ball after ball, forming a trail of energy that came and went as it passed through every single ball on the stack.

By the time it came to the very last ball, Figment went to it and opened it up casually. Dragonite reared back in a panic, only to see it open, and allow a very, very small white creature to come stumbling out, spent and tired, onto Figment's massive hand.

"Hello, Bartok!" Figment boomed happily, looming up over the now very, very, very tiny bat-dragon. The white creature spun about, dizzied and wobbling, collapsing in a cute heap on Figment's palm. "Sorry for the dizzy spell, but it was the only thing I could think of, to stop your growth from going haywire..."

"Aw, hey, d-don't mention it, Fig," Bartok wheezed, blinking his eyes, closing them, fluttering them, anything anyone would do, while trying to shake off vertigo. "N...never felt better, yanno...am I ever glad to see someone with a brain around!"

Dragonite crept in, fascinated for the dozenth time in minutes. Figment saw the two of them up close, then quickly did his best to imagine Bartok could understand...because she clearly had something to say.

"That's your friend?" she asked, snuffling down over Bartok, who remained merely toy-sized to them. "H...hello there..."

"Yeah, hiya," Bartok drawled, rubbing his temples at the ears, just shy of the horns. "Good to meetcha, there. Boy, how many portals did ya cram me through?"

"Several hundred. That's what I figured it would take, to finally spend all the power built up into your next growth spurt."

"How could you know what it would have come out to?" Dragonite interjected, her antennae perking up.

"Math," Figment chirped, wagging faster. "I had seen how humongous he grew in our last world, altogether, and I applied that to the elapsed time spent fighting Ludmilla, and after..."

"Who?" she asked, evermore overwhelmed.

"*Bad news*, is who," Bartok said, collecting himself enough to sit calmly in Figment's palm. "Seriously though, thanks there, Figment, y'saved my bacon. Whew. I must a' been big as a town, there, before Toothless got me back in that ball. Go team, eh?"

"Toothless?" Figment repeated. "Is he alright?"

"Sure, far as I know. I was asleep after we left ol' Baba's place, an' I woke up in the middle of some goofy arena, fer somethin', I dunno..."

"A pokemon arena," Dragonite pondered.

"Yeah, that, an' there was Toothless, with this crusty old guy in a pirate suit or somethin', and next thing I knew, BWOOMP! I was blowin' up like crazy, got so big I filled the cliff it was all sittin' on ...smashed the whole place up pretty good, I guess—"

"An old sailor type!?" Dragonite boomed, suddenly intense. "You saw an old human there?"

"Yeah, so?"

"Is he okay!?"

"Sure, I felt him snugglin' up safe on Toothless, before the whole place went blammo."

Dragonite sighed so hard it nearly blew Bartok off of Figment's hand.

"Oh, thank goodness. Thank you! That human is...very dear..."

"Really?" Figment asked, looking to her, then to a tiny, confused Bartok. Before any elaborations could commence Bartok shuddered, then rolled his eyes, tingling visibly. "Wuh-oh, one moment, sorry! Back in you go, for now, okay?"

"Ugh, *fine*—"

The words only got so far out of Bartok when Figment bumped him with a pokeball, and it took him back inside it. He turned to see Dragonite there, rubbing her head over tenderly.

"I know, it's a lot to take in," Figment offered. "I understand entirely. For what it's worth, we've been through much crazier, up to this point."

"I believe you," she moaned. "My head feels ready to explode. This is way too much. Do you really always stand around talking and theorizing, this much? That's insane!"

Figment beamed, proudly.

"Thank you!"

Even Dragonite laughed, briefly.

"O-okay, so...you're from other worlds...you have other-world dragons here, captured, on this ferry, along with my Leon...something important is in that pouch of yours, and you can make portals, but in this world, they only form inside pokeballs."

"Yes."

"Okay. What now?"

Figment thought yet again, making Dragonite growl with impatience.

"Can...multiple pokemon get inside of a single ball?" he asked, abruptly.

"N...no, it's one per ball, maximum, usually."

Figment thought even harder.

"That does complicate things. I was going to try capturing everyone in one ball and open a portal out of this world, through it. But...that doesn't sound like a likely option. What could work, then? What? We would...need to...ah, put one dragon in each ball...that totals five...no, six balls, for Leon...you know what? Let's just grab a mess of these—"

After so much back-and-forth, Figment was suddenly all action, throwing poor Dragonite even further as he passed a handful of pokeballs to her, then kept a handful, himself.

"Do you know where onboard they're being held, by chance?" he asked.

"N-not exactly, no, I don't use the ferry..."

As if hearing its name the ferry responded, the entire thing pitching hard left, tilting deeper and deeper off balance. Both Figment and Dragonite shuffled and skidded along the floor as inclined, before a shock wave tore from bow to stern—and, once again, the alarms were talking all about it.

"Now what!?" Dragonite moaned, vying to keep upright as the boat steadied back.

"I think I know why no one's come back with that ladder," Figment muttered, turning back toward the sound of numerous, highly-motivated boots thudding down a hallway. "Best to follow! I think their efforts to stop it didn't quite pan out!"

"T-to stop what?" Dragonite asked, following along behind as Figment squeezed himself into the relevant spaces, forcing his semi-grown bulk through.

"My friends' growth spurts!"

Lucario could only observe from the overhead vent as the insanity unfolded. The female dragon, Cynder, had finally begun to swell too big, her bulk snapping and shattering the front of the welded tanks, sending a torrent of fluids splattering onto the cargo deck. A dozen suit-clad scientists scrambled as her groaning muscles burst bigger, and bigger, forcing the webbed cracks of the break-point to push further out, as more and more of her sleeping body ballooned free.

"Sedatives!" one worker hollered over the klaxon, motioning for someone, anyone to go stab her with an oversized syringe.

"The fluid *was* a sedative—"

The tank blew open down the center as Cynder's bust swelled free, creeping bigger and heavier over the floor. Her humongous muscles boomed larger, still, as her house-sized muzzle thumped out, her head and huge horns resting on the ground. The cacophony of cracks and snaps married the rubber swell of her mass as she remained knocked out, dumbly bulging in every direction.

Serves them right, Lucario thought, smiling just the slightest little bit. Let them take on more than they can handle, for once!

"Get him out of there!"

One voice soared over the others, making Lucario seize up the moment she heard it. She knew who it was; it was as burned-into her mind as breathing, or moving.

"Get him out, I said!"

Anders stormed through the confusion and hysteria with big, angry motions, stepping over officers and scientists alike as they slipped around in the spillage. He stormed up to Leon's tank, watching in morbid fascination as his partner kept ballooning bigger and stronger, there in the tank. More and more of the Charizard's bulk mashed into the interior, more and more cracks forming, the bigger and mightier his muscles erupted.

"We don't want any of them bursting out! Look at this other dragon, you fool!"

Anders stomped over to the chief officer and took him up by his collar.

"I don't care about the others, you dolt, you get my boy Leon free! I'm not asking! I didn't give any permission for this garbage, you understand? He's a loyal employee, and my friend! My *only* friend, you get me? Now, I'm not going to ask again—"

Cynder's body blew up even larger, so powerfully that everyone turned to her as she rumbled and burst up again, swelling from her initial 200 feet to 330, her overgrown biceps stretching as they ballooned into the slipping researchers, parting them like dominoes. Her abs swelled out, her enormous thigh muscles exploding free, as her wings and back surged into the shattered remains of the tanks.

"Get her secured, use everything we have on hand!" the lead officer bellowed, before turning to Anders. "I don't care if you ask or shout or do a back-flip! I don't take orders from grunts! Get out of here, before I throw you overboard, and your pet!"

All the sound and fury culminated in a sudden explosion as Cynder's trembling body began to burst even larger, stretching and billowing out over everything and everyone around her. 350 feet erupted to 400...440...490...her bulk relentlessly expanded as she snored on, her side-position forcing her titanic shoulders to bump, then push, then tear up through screeching metal. Her entire body filled the bulk of the hold now, shoving struggling little humans back into snapping, shattering cargo crates, as Spyro's tank thudded and rolled away, cracked, but unbroken.

"The bindings, sir!" one tech shouted, as she and a team fought to successfully lash just one growing scaly wrist. "We can hold—"

A soft groan escaped Cynder as she throbbed, then blew up to 600 feet, her feet tearing right through the hold walls, crushing through hallways and containers and strapped-down company vehicles like they were tin. Her huge head pushed through to the other hall, then through it as well, compacting tons of metal into thick sheets of wreckage as her horns burst out the siding, and the entire ferry began to pitch right with her shifting weight.

"Everyone, out!" the lead finally hollered, waving. "Out, out, now! Get to the deck! Evacuation protocol, C! Get to the Neo Mauville docks! Go!"

"I'm not leaving Leon to sink with this stupid tin can!" Anders roared, even as the lead shoved him off, and climbed up the tilt of the floor.

"I don't care what you do!"

As the crew fled, Lucario watched. She watched Cynder's breasts swell closer and closer, her instincts unsure whether to stay put or flee along with the Devon personnel. Just as they loomed on the other side of the vent grate, and just as she turned away in fear, a soft *thump* sounded, then the monster-sized behemoth of a dragoness was suddenly gone.

Huh?

She peered through the grate, then started wagging.

Figsaw!

From her vantage, it was easier to understand: a single high-grade sort of pokeball rolled on the flooring as the boat pitched back from the sudden lack of so much weight and muscle, nearly riding the grade into a crushed hallway before Figsaw scooped it up into his paws and hugged it close.

"Got it!" he laughed, wagging, as Anders staggered back, completely agog.

"What..." was all the startled human managed, before Dragonite slid into the hold with him, just as the tilt of the ferry started to correct back to nearly-normal. At the sight of her, Lucario gulped. She had been ready to burst out and join the dragon, but a new, worse fear clutched her insides.

"How big was she going to get, Figsaw?" Dragonite grumbled, as the purple dragon moved over to Spyro and Leon's tanks.

"Well, the candies we put in were supposed to take effect much earlier, really," he nervously chuckled. "I couldn't say why Spyro isn't reacting as much...unless his body takes sedation much harder than hers...interesting!"

"No, it isn't!" Dragonite huffed, as Anders kept pressed to the still-breaking glass of Leon's tank, as he pulsed slowly bigger within it. "It's scary! What if she did serious damage to the boat?"

At that, a single streak of water finally shot through, from where Cynder's head had impacted the siding of the interior. The leak went from a pressurized trickle, to a shotgun-blast, as water began to geyser inside.

To Anders, one dragon was speaking excellent human; the Dragonite, more amazingly, kept rurring and roaring back, and she didn't sound pleased at all. When the water blasted in, that tore it.

"Whatever's going on," Anders shouted, getting the bigger beasts' attention, "j-just help me! Help me get Leon out of here!"

Dragonite finally looked up at the tank, and roared.

"L-leon!? He's...growing? Wait, he looks... like a human's body looks..."

"That would be the candy!" Figment explained, hurriedly, thudding his inflated self over to Anders, who leaned back at his approach. "I can certainly go through the moat with you, on all this, sir...but for now, the ship is sinking, and we need to move!"

"F...fine! Fine, do what you need to!"

Water pooled up to their feet, and it had only been a minute, tops. The geyser swelled even wider as the sounds of pinging bolts blowing loose echoed, the siding bending away against more and more water pressure. Figment took Cynder's pokeball and stuffed it into his candy satchel, thankfully just large enough to take it comfortably.

"Help me smash the tanks, they should be damaged enough!" he ordered.

"Of course!" she huffed, taking up a striking stance. "Hang on!"

Anders splashed back through knee-high water as Dragonite leapt into a full-on headbutt; she slammed Spyro's tank, and it shattered away with astonishing force, making even Figment stumble back in surprise. As soon as the 60-foot Spyro spilled free of it, Figment tossed another ball. He went in easily, vanishing, and Figment waded through belly-high waters to retrieve it as it floated about.

Before Anders could plead for Leon's turn Dragonite inhaled, then blasted out a blazing orb that smashed into the final tank, blasting it apart, just as the 100-foot muscle bound Charizard exploded free. Anders finally caught real sight of him and cried out, even as the waters rose to his chest.

"What'd they d-do to him!?"

Not bothering to answer, Figment threw another pokeball, and in the humongous man-zard went, in a burst of energy and light. The ball went back into Figment's gigantic hands as Anders swam over, waving, demanding a moment's notice.

"H-hey! Let me have him, whatever your name is!"

"Figment, sir!" the bigger dragon chirped, before kindly lobbing Leon's ball over to him. Anders snatched it with one able hand, not daring to miss, and the look on his face was an entire conversation packed into one flash of desperate relief.

"T-thank you—"

The wall screamed as it finally gave out, letting the sea in, and the waters rose toward the hold

ceiling. Even Figment and Dragonite's feet left the ground as they floated up with Anders, all as Lucario watched in horror from above.

"We're not reaching the topside, like this!" Anders hollered, over the roar of the water. "The doors down here are flooded! It'd take several minutes to get to the pad, with them dry!"

Figment bit his lip as the waters nearly reached the top. His hands held Spyro's pokeball tight, having had neither time nor chance to stow it in his bag, with Cynder's.

"D-Dragonite! Quick, get a pink candy out of my satchel! Can you reach it?"

"I've got it, hold on!"

The ferry groaned deep, a horrible bend and crack riding the center. Within the vent, Lucario looked to the candy in her paw, gulping anxiously.

I'm too small to save them, she thought. Not like this!

As she brought the candy to her muzzle, the ship pitched again, and she banged the back of her head hard against the vent shaft, going limp after, the candy still in her mouth.

"I've got one!" Dragonite cried as Figment swam around to face her. Anders swam toward the two bigger dragons as the waters made it up to the rafters, starting to pour into the vents overhead. "It's pink and b-blue!"

"Put it in my mouth, please!" Figment ordered, opening his maw, only for a loose beam to swing low and bash him down into the waters.

"Figment!"

Just as the flood overtook the entire boat, just as Dragonite and Anders' heads vanished under the full rise of the water, Dragonite panicked and crammed the tiny candy into her own mouth, swallowing it with the seawater in one hard gulp.

To the remaining human onboard, everything was a swirl of motion and suspension; he saw Figment thud down into the floor in slow motion, only to look up, as the Dragonite's body started to rumble terribly, stirring the flood waters so much that even he felt it. He swam back in a moment of reflexive shock as seconds later, the orange dragon's whole body trembled, then boomed out. Her sides stretched tight as her feral belly and haunches and rear and tail literally ballooned bigger, expanding wider and wider, larger and larger. Her warm scales collided with him, shoving him back as her head surged up into the ceiling, then rammed up through it, her swelling shoulders crushing into the walls, smashing the entire hold back as she inflated endlessly. The soft, half-smothered rumbling gave way to a low groaning ripple as he felt her shudder, then swell even greater against him, against *everything*...

Up on the deck, ten helicopters all whirred to life, the staff and scientists clambering in as orderly as Devon could ever have taught them, all as the ship tilted and moaned in distress below. With a circling of a raised hand they all took to flight, one after the other, a small swarm fleeing. The flock bore West to a gargantuan rig that blotted the lowering Sun and crowded the horizon with its bulk.

No longer looking back, no one took notice from the air as the sinking ship slowly bulged out around the middle. The former definition of a boat was abandoned as it distended into a larger and larger sphere, windows snapping, walls bowing, beams curling out of splitting openings. All the while, the sphere swelled larger, wider, as mounds of cream and orange exploded through every aperture, peeling the hull away like a metallic rind.

A vast lump rose up through the topside, obliterating the deck, paneling, rails, and helipads, all of which blew away around a massive dragon head. Two monstrous antennae caught the edges of the hull as it blew out, then whipped up into the air, higher and higher, a vast, echoing gasp of air escaping as Dragonite took a long, wanting breath—which, in turn, only inflated her spherical belly even bigger, in the water.

"GUH!"

A cough like a monsoon followed as she inhaled again and ballooned even larger, quite literally blowing herself up into a great scaly balloon. Buoyant as a blimp, she held there, floating on the waves, as the ferry tightened its shell about her, then broke at the middle, letting all of her tremendously huge belly boom into the open waters as its debris rained down.

She rocked there a moment, lost in the waves...until she understood things better, and patted her huge belly with building-sized paws. Each thump made a deep drumbeat as she continued to grow and grow, frighteningly so, surging bigger than a ferry roughly 600 feet long, and 100 feet wide. She was bigger than the entire thing, and then some. A Dragonite, over 600 feet tall, and over 1,400 feet wide—and only blowing up bigger, by the moment.

"Goodness!" she rurred, in her own language. "I...I'm huge! Oh, Figment! Where..."

She squinted, trying to scour her own boundless belly for any signs of life. The only reason she caught sight of Figment was from how contrasting his purple was, to her light orange. A massive claw nudged him cautiously, testing.

"Are...a-are you alright?" she murmured, still bobbing in the waves, her claw growing bigger and bigger beside his limp form, her belly rising and swelling under him.

Another poke. Nothing.

"Hah, uh," she sputtered, trying to look around for help. "Hey? Wake up!"

There, held in Figment's arms, was the comparatively-tiny Anders. The nudging woke him first, and he struggled in the dragon's bulky arms, coughing and groaning.

"W-what...ah, what happened," he slurred, the little human unable to free himself. "What...ah!"

Dragonite lurched back, bobbing in the sea, as surprised by Anders as he was of her looming high overhead, a total titan. She closed her huge eyes and shuddered as she blew up yet again, inflating with a loud, echoing stretch up to 700 feet tall, and 1,800 feet wide, before at last, it stopped, and she blew out a soft, relieved sigh.

"RUURUR!"

To Anders, it was a blast of sound, incomprehensible and booming.

"Are you okay?" she was asking. "Is Leon okay?"

With no means to fully communicate, she grumbled to herself and started to turn her massive bulk around, slowly, to face the looming specter of Neo Mauville. As she did so, something small caught her eye, far off.

"What is that?" she murmured, looking closer. "Is...oh...oh, no, no!"

What Dragonite saw, at length, was a modest-sized ship speeding along the waves, toward the rig. It had to have been coming from further off the Hoenn coastline, from Ever Grande City, which likely made it—the S.S. Tidal.

Drake's ship!

"Hey," she started, waving both enormous hands where she bobbed. "Hey! Don't! D-don't go there! Please! Ah, can't you see me!? I'm...I-I'm so big! Look this way! Drake!"

She might have been wrong. She wanted to be wrong. But, if she wasn't...

"No!"

With that, Dragonite put her massive, inflated tail to work, wagging up enough momentum to start drifting sluggishly towards Neo Mauville—but at the rate she was going, there was no way to beat the ship there, or cut off its course. All she could do was move as the evening clouds steadily overtook the skies, traces of a bad storm starting to rumble to life up above...

EARLIER

Cold water clutched her fur, countering what body heat she had, until Lucario snapped awake in a primal panic. Her head banged into the vent shaft ceiling as she bolted upright, sending her splashing back into the intruding waters. What had only been a trickle tumbled into a rush of doom as the ferry's lowest floor flooded completely, the vent displacing its air as the sea squirmed in, determined to catch and kill.

Figment!

Maybe he was still below, maybe not. There was only the odd rumble and creak of the ship as it warped, presumably from intake. Didn't matter, it was time to go—

Water blasted into a geyser that battered and attacked, flinging her along the vent shaft as it too flooded, choking her out. She held what breath she could get, the candy glued to her dry tongue, as she swam through the rush, then braced and slammed against a corner. She clawed her way along the steel casing, in the same direction, struggling to reach a vertical connection that hadn't flooded yet.

Knowing there were desperate seconds, she clawed and gashed her way up into the nearest opening, free from the water—only to have the overflow rise up after, chasing close.

Higher ground, higher ground

Lucario's claws *thunked* in time into warping metal as she felt the waters claim her foot-paws, then her knees. She grunted, flexed, and leapt up, snagging an edge and pulling herself up into another passage. Any direction, didn't matter.

Go go go go

Despite her time among humans, it was Lucario's animal instincts that kicked in first as she darted South, kicked out the first grate she found and jumped down into a kitchen area. No sooner than she had landed then that same warping noise returned, across the ship, worse than before. Somewhere down below, the entire ferry seemed to groan in pain, then split completely apart.

OH, NO—

Water blew in from everywhere as Lucario clambered atop a stove, making for the vent, only for water to blast out from it as well, shoving her back down into the rising water. Pots and pans and knives and crates scattered in a free-for-all through the waves, making more and more of a mess for Lucario to splash through as she fought for the doorway and slipped through, just as the kitchen overflowed.

The current pushed her up toward the hall ceiling, but she had time enough to not only breathe in again, but glance at the nearest guidance map on the wall.

STORAGE! Left, Left, Right! GO!

The flooding was up to the ceiling, give an inch; it was now or never.

Lucario balled herself and spun, getting her feet on the ceiling, so that she could kick off toward the door, bank left, and swim fast. The current pushed the other way, forcing her to clutch the hallway railing and pull herself down to the next left, then the following right; by the time she swam into the storage area the entire space was twisting upside down, as the ferry had lost all stability. This, in turn, sent the storage contents that weren't buckled down or fastened into a tumble, in the water.

Her wide eyes scanned about for the one thing, the only thing, that could possibly keep her from drowning in cold ocean water. Among the confusion of items and splintered crate wood and flung-off tops, she finally found it. There was only one to be found in all that mess, but one was all she needed.

Her vision darkened and smeared as her heart slammed in her chest. She swallowed, but everything was dry, ironically. Even the candy had practically welded itself to her tongue, and wasn't budging. Didn't matter. Just get the thing.

Her paw sought it, then missed; she drifted back, partially blacking out again, before she lunged on pure will, snatching the solitary pokeball before it floated off. As her sight left her, as her lungs failed her, Lucario's paw drifted along its exterior, then pushed the button on the front.

13.

Had Figment been among the conscious world, he would have marveled at helicopters. Oh, he had read every scrap he could find at the academy, every printed thing about the contraption in Coquainvilliers and its moment of flight, to be sure—but to see sustained freedom of movement at such altitudes, for himself, he might have...well, fainted.

And the last to alight on the rig's helipad beat them all, in every aspect: regal, sleek, and massive, it descended like a parent about to feed a flock of offspring. Or, punish them.

"What happened out there!?"

Even with the screaming rotors and howling winds, everyone could hear Mr. Stone 'speak'. His voice cut through everything, without the aid of a megaphone; there wasn't anger present, so much as an intensity of inquiry so strong, it was all consuming.

"The Tsuwabuki, sir," the lead officer began, running up from his helicopter with a salute. "The entire ferry has sunk, due to unforeseen interference and sabotage!"

"W-what?" President Stone balked, almost offended. "Why would...nobody even knows about...who would be so foolish!? If they know what we're doing here, then why? Why would they prevent it from happening?"

"I wish I knew, sir—"

"We have little to no time! A Dynamaxed pokemon's combined energy might have done it, but now...what of those new subjects we captured, that amped-up Charizard? They would have solved everything! It was a godsend! Now, they're all sinking to the bottom of the ocean!?"

"I'm so sorry—"

"Gah, apologies!" Stone growled, waving it away as he stormed over to the helipad entrance. "Apologies won't save us! We're going with Plan Alpha, we're back to square one! Ready the Dynamax protocol, with the pokemon we still have! We'll need every ounce of energy they can give us! Heaven help us, we'll need it all!"

The elevator would have been filled with staff, had they been stupid enough to join the president. Instead, everyone waited for the next one, knowing better. Things were bad enough, already.

Those aboard the Neo Mauville reactor all turned to full attention as President Stone stepped off of the elevator and made a line directly to a series of enormous tanks. Each one wore a sequentially-lined numeral, a designator, and he glanced over to see what the last one was.

"Eight," he said, in distaste. By the time the other scientists made it over to him, he had turned to them, glaring hard enough to silence the entire room. "Eight tanks?"

"Eight that managed optimal energy capacity settings, sir," the lead spoke, as the other staff finished exiting their ride down, in the distance. "We had to increase the parameters, reinforce the

linings and interiors...sir, the upgraded Dynamax output, is...well, we're concerned, it's power is clearly escalating, we fear that using any of them to overcharge pokemon on site now, would be—"

"What?" Stone cut in, straightening up. "A disaster!?! Should we stop trying to avert one, for another? What's yours, Lewis? A whopping 7? Greater than a tornado, an earthquake? Hmm? An 8, even? Should we stop trying to survive a 1,000, for the sake of an 8?"

"N-no, just—"

"What's a risk, in the face of annihilation? We have days, at best, before Delta impacts us! You're fine with suppressing information to the public and building an entire rig out off the coast in secret, but you have trepidations when it comes to pulling the trigger on our destroyer? Ridiculous!"

Stone stepped past them all, past the tanks and the loading gear and rumbling vehicles, waiting outside the laboratory loading bay. He snapped his fingers, taciturn and stern, and one worker anxiously snapped to. Stone pointed to the console lining the plexiglas panes revealing the reactor itself, out beyond, easily as big as a stadium, and as tall as a tapering tower. The worker shuffled over to the console, and pressed what needed to be pressed.

"I do understand, sir," the lead started, watching, "it's just...if you'd let us run the numbers a few times more, we could know how successful that many newly-Dynamed pokemon's energies would be—"

"If you can find us a few extra days of living, right now, then feel free to," Stone sighed. "This is no longer a matter of luxury, or even morals, it's pure necessity. I don't like any of it, either! It's providence, even *mercy*, that my own son isn't here for this. If we have no planet, he has no future, none of us do. If those pokemon don't give it their all, along with the rest of us, then they'll be dead, anyway, won't they!"

The hard logic fell like steel, its unheard and final clang ringing in every heart. Even the great President of Devon Corp took a moment to shudder, before nodding one last time to the console.

"Get the subjects all loaded for transport to the reactor. You have ten minutes!"

"Sir!" a voice crackled through an intercom. "We have an unauthorized visitor, off the East back port! It's a ship!"

Even President Stone's mighty focus wavered as he turned to the speaker, then spoke back:

"What...a ship? What ship?"

"It's the S.S. Tidal, sir!"

"Drake?" Stone exclaimed, openly confused. "What in the world is he doing here? Hail him, immediately! Do not clear for embarkation! No entry!"

A moment's silence answered, uneasily.

"Well?" Stone growled. "There's no time for detours, acknowledge—"

"He," the intercom stammered, "he says..."

"Tell him his son is here," Drake growled, already tired of having to go through a grunt, through radio contact. "He tried to put in a call to Devon, President Stone wasn't there, so I ferried him over here on his recommendation. Or, just let me tell him, myself. Either way, that's enough chatter."

Behind him, Steven Stone calmly wandered out of the Tidal's bridge, down the stairwell, and around to the starboard side of the bow, making for the dock connection portal. As there would have to be, multiple dock workers stood below on the edge of the rig, all shrugs and murmurs as Steven waved them down.

"This is Steven Stone, coming aboard! Let's have that portal, gentlemen! Or do you want to bother my father? He is here, isn't he?"

"He knows," one worker mouthed. Even from a distance, Steven saw.

"Shut up, moron!" the other mouthed. There was no need to read lips, given the way he smacked him with his Devon cap in reply.

"We can't do that, sir..." a third dock worker started, only to trail off, wide-eyed and gasping, at the sight of a monster-sized black dragon suddenly looming over Steven from the side of the Tidal. "Sir! Lo-look out, behind you!"

"Shouldn't you explain?" Toothless laughed, unable to hide his entertainment.

"Once we're on the rig, please," Steven politely replied. "Would you, kindly?"

This was more like it.

"My pleasure," the black dragon boomed, straightening out a crooked grin.

He collected the little human up in both paws, slung a huge foot over the side, and leapt clean off. The impact was such that his landing shook the entire dock, sending the three nearby workers into a totter. Toothless opened both hands, letting Steven out in style, insofar as the human only needed to fix his suit a tiny bit as he slid off and walked over to the staff.

"Which way to my father?" he asked, patiently.

"Sir, we *really* are under strict orders not to—"

Toothless loomed as thoroughly as he pleased, crossing massively over-built, bulging arms.

"Ah..."

"It's a formality, no worries," Steven chuckled, walking past them. "He would only be in one or two possible locations, and I think I know which one it is. I don't want to get anyone in trouble, so I won't press it. I just have some concerns to share with him about the new wares."

“In and out,” Toothless rumbled, shrugging massive shoulders. Given his fifty-foot size, there was no chance of squeezing that much bulk into any opening around Neo Mauville, so he remained standing out there with the others, until the bridge door slammed open, up on the ship, and Drake leaned out over the rail.

“He's gone!” Drake shouted. Toothless twisted around, muscles creaking loudly, his thick tail looping around on the dock.

“He let himself in!”

“That fool kid,” the old man grumbled, fixing his hat.

On the other side of the rig's Western sector, a vast light-orange and cream balloon drifted along the waters, surprisingly silent. Despite her newfound size, even Dragonite felt puny, compared to the monstrous rig. Had she been the size of a mere human, it still could have constituted a whole mansion. Maybe even an office building, like Devon's headquarters.

“Where do I go to get in?” she wondered as Anders watched her, far down below. To him, it was all rumblings and feral snorts, but the man knew what was going on. It hardly took a genius to understand. She could figure that whole mess out, anyhow—he had something else to check on.

He clutched the pokeball tight, then lobbed it ahead of him. It thumped on Dragonite's swollen scales, then snapped open. Anders had seen his buddy and brother-in-arms appear so many times, over the years, almost to the point of numbness...but what emerged made him leap back in renewed shock.

Leon was there, alright. As the light gave way to full form, the Charizard towered over him, at over 300 feet tall; even sitting (which he was), Leon was still as big as a building, to his owner. Had he grown even bigger, within the pokeball—

Wait...sitting?

That's right, he had seen him there, in the tank, before the ferry went under. His pal looked more like a human with pokemon features than a true pokemon, and up close, it was even more pronounced. Countless sinews threaded godly muscles and tight scales, a set of looming orange thighs crowning a...

“Whoa,” Anders huffed, looking away for a moment to collect himself. “Buddy, they...really did *something*, didn't they?”

Opting to survey up North, the human saw a towering cliff of bulging abs, a swollen and enormous pectoral shelf twitching and lording over them. The chin beyond shifted left, then right, before Leon's familiar muzzle finally dipped down, revealing the face of his lifelong partner.

“Leon!”

All the oddity and confusion of the past ten-or-so minutes' chaos fell away as Anders ran up and hugged Leon's knee, tight.

“Hah! I was...oh, man, you...you scared me! Hah! You sure look...*healthy*, buddy! F-for sure...”

“RRRRRR.”

Leon's voice had always been respectably deep, even at normal size. Now, however, it was like a boulder convention, at happy hour. Anders just hugged in tighter, not even remotely deterred.

“Hey...hey, pal, can you uh, talk to her? Tell her to go over to the Eastern side dock!”

Leon blinked, then finally bothered to look up. His eyes went fearfully wide at the sight of Dragonite's massive neck and head, up above. At his size, Anders could feel the Charizard's gulp.

“It's her, Leon, relax! You know her, remember? From work?”

Leon squinted, then sighed through his huge nostrils, letting the seizing tension go. He rumbled up to Dragonite, who gasped in kind, surprised that he was out. The two got to chatting for a longer time than Anders had anticipated. Had he been bigger, he might have noticed how hard Dragonite was blushing, the entire time:

“H-how have you been?” Dragonite asked, in her own dragon language. “We haven't gotten to speak or visit in ages! It's...good to see you!”

“Well, we keep busy,” Leon said, coolly.

“I know...” Dragonite trailed off, embarrassed. “I must look so ridiculous...I'm sorry we're speaking under such, uh...*odd* circumstances as this...”

“You're *big*,” Leon replied, flatly. No, there was something there. *Envy?*

“So are you,” she murmured, seeing the massive bulk and brawn covering the gigantic pokemon. What was between both massive thighs had certainly caught her sight, as well.

“But, you're *bigger*.”

“Is that a problem?” Dragonite asked, her huge antennae bobbing nervously.

“N...no. No. It's fine. You look...*nice*. I...”

“You're used to being the biggest and baddest,” she giggled, shaking everything. “I remember.”

Leon came as close as a humanoid pokemon possibly could to clearing their throat.

Standing there on the slope of Dragonite's inflated belly, Anders could only watch and wait. He looked out over the ocean as they drifted nearer, then looked back up as he felt her humongous neck twist this way and that, as she spoke to Leon.

Then, at last, the officer looked straight out over the field of scales, away from them all, and saw Figment. He closed his eyes, and tried them out again, to make sure he was seeing right.

One moment earlier, the purple dragon-type had been a certain size; now, he seemed *bigger*.

“What in the...”

Anders stood up, slowly, the ground of Dragonite's stomach easily traversable at her sheer scope. He took a step closer, then backed away as Figment's body rumbled, then swelled larger, again, openly growing. Seasoned security officer or not, Anders retreated.

“It's you. Right. What kind of dragon type...is this!?” he gasped, as Figment rumbled again, the slumbering behemoth blowing up to 100 feet, then stopping out of nowhere at 120. This left plenty of room on the overall breadth of Dragonite's belly, which was for the best once Figment suddenly spluttered and tossed, in the throes of, perhaps, some kind of bad dream. It proved enough to pull Leon's attention.

“Uh...” Anders started, only to freeze when Figment's turning pulled a tightly-bound satchel to the side, allowing its undone flap to open. One pokeball tumbled out, bounced down on the scales, and started to gradually roll down toward the sea.

“Hey...hey!”

Figment remained deaf in his slumber, leaving Anders to clamber for the rolling ball. At the same moment Figment's clutching hand opened and another ball rolled free, on the other side of him. As Anders raced away for the first ball, Leon growled in a panic and lunged out over Dragonite's belly, his enormous hand slamming down over the pokeball. In response, Dragonite couldn't help but chuckle at the light tickling.

Anders dove at the last second, his arm out. His fingers closed around the ball, mid-bounce, catching it just as it lost ground for the ocean. This put his body into a forward slide, however, as he had finally found the drop of her body, and as he too went flying over into the air, a titanic green membrane shot out to catch both him and the ball. The tiny human thumped down safe within a massive orange wing and as it brought him back up, he was whooping in a thrill seeker's delight.

“Haha! Yes! What a catch!” he hollered, as Leon safely lowered him back onto Dragonite with his wing. The massive Charizard feral-laughed back, nodding. “You're the best!”

“RURRRRUR!”

“Got 'em! We got 'em both!” Anders crowed, as pleased with himself as Leon was. “Right, heh...now, let's get over to the Eastern—*what's this?*”

Having taken a moment from all the celebrating, Anders saw the rig getting smaller, not larger. He turned back to Dragonite' sky-high muzzle, shrugging.

“What gives?” he asked. “We're kind of doing the opposite of 'going', here.”

Leon rumbled something to Dragonite, and her gigantic head shook, her grimace telling.

“Leon, spill it! What's the problem?”

Leon bit his lip, then put his muscled arms to work. Impressively, he did a pretty solid job of mimicking water waves, then motioning away—then bringing both arms up, his biceps flaring massively as he pantomimed having arms that can't reach anything. He wagged his tail, then shook his head, and Anders went stiff.

“Wait...what!? She can't?”

He looked out to the far side of Dragonite's body. Sure enough, her belly was so massively bloated and ballooned out, there was no chance she could possibly get either arm anywhere near water.

“Oh, the current's got us, bad! Her tail isn't fast enough to fight it? There must...there's gotta be some way to steer! Leon, buddy...can you manage it?”

He knew what he was asking. A fire-based dragon like him, getting soaked—it made Anders weak in the stomach, just imagining it. Leon, by contrast, simply stared on, thinking.

“I know, I wouldn't ask, normally...but if we get lost at sea...”

Leon looked up to Dragonite, then back to Anders, and snorted.

“Oh, Leon, don't,” Dragonite rumbled, blinking. “I-I can wag faster, I swear!”

“It's not going to be enough,” Leon growl-spoke back, rolling his gigantic back muscles in preparation. “I've got this. I'll take to flight, loop back, then push—“

“No! If you push at my neck, you'll just shove my head down, I'll roll into the water! You'd have to push at my midsection or lower, and that would mean getting near the water! Your tail-fire...”

Leon thought, then looked back at his tail, and its trademark flame blazing away at the tip, like a living candle.

“I wouldn't even get you all to the rig in time, would I?”

Dragonite shook her head sadly, but honestly. Leon thought, and thought hard.

“...I'll have to get help.”

“F...from Devon!?” Dragonite gasped, making Anders look back up at the both of them. “After what they've been doing to pokemon!?”

“We're *not* going through this again,” Leon grumbled, louder. “I'd rather they still save you...and Anders! Just, use your tail enough to try and keep as close to the rig as possible, I'll have some boats ride out to pull you in!”

Before she or the shocked Anders could argue Leon flapped his massive wings, then bounded off, pushing Dragonite back in the ocean for a moment, as he took to flight.

“Leon!” Anders all but screamed, clutching both pokeballs. “What—ah, that idiot! No!”

With nothing else on the docket Anders gathered himself back up, then marched over to Figment's colossal form and kicked him right on the side, hard. Nothing. An ant bite would have at least stung.

“Hey, you!” Anders barked, working up for another kick. “Fig...Figment! Yeah, you! Wake up, already! Come on!”

He leaned in, and shouldered into a charge, bouncing off the purple titan's scales.

“Ah, why do...all dragons...always have...to be trouble!?”

He balled a fist, and nearly punched the wall of reptilian brawn—but thought better of it, and just put all his frustration into a single tap of one finger, instead, right between two massive scales.

Figment jolted up straight and rigid, his muzzle swinging open in a surprisingly squeaky cry:

“AH! I'M UP! YES, SORRY, BLAIR! THEFIRSTLAWOFTHERMODYNAMICS is, ah.”

Still large enough to do so, Figment's stirring had not only knocked Anders back, but had sent all of Dragonite into a wobble, the dragon-type bellowing in momentary dismay.

“F-Figment!” she boomed, grinning at the sight of him. He mutually flinched, her muzzle looming over even him, his feet firmly set on her blimped belly. He put A and B together, as that was about all he had to work with, and sighed.

“Oh, Dragonite! Eheh, I...I must have...”

He looked about, saw the ocean, saw her, and rubbed his head, just below the horns.

“So, you took the candy.”

“Mm-hmm.”

“And the ship?”

“Sunk,” both Anders and her said, together, though one was a good deal easier to hear.

“Dear, dear. The pokeballs!”

“Anders has them, Figment, it's alright!” she soothed, as Figment processed, then looked about below. Indeed, there was a sort of ant standing impatiently about his feet, in human form.

“They fell out, I didn't steal them or anything,” the man started, reflexively defensive. “We caught them as they tumbled loose. Er, Leon, and I.”

“Leon?” Figment murmured. “Right, your Charizard, yes! Where—”

“Went over there, to Devon,” Dragonite said. “To get help, boats. The current's too strong, even with me wagging my tail, and he can't afford to get stuck in the water, so off he went.”

“Really!” Figment chirped, his fingertip on his chin. “But...you said he knows Devon is a bad company...”

“Hey, hey, hold up,” Anders shot back, from down below. “That's my company, you're bad mouthing, up there!”

Dragonite *rurred* something harsh at Anders, and the human shrank back. Figment knew what she had said, and it hadn't been terribly nice.

“Well, I can help, happily,” Figment replied, grinning. “Aside from a bump on the head, I'm terribly able! I'll uh...just give you a push, with, uh...”

He looked down at the waters, and a fear he hadn't even had time to fully-bury resurfaced.

“Ah, *you* can do it, and be alright, yes!” Dragonite cheered, rocking her inflated body about in the ocean a moment. “Please, Figment! I don't trust Devon to help Leon, at this point! He's taking a stupid risk—they won't bother with us, they'll just recapture him, I know it!”

A cold panic churned up into a froth inside Figment, but he swallowed it down. It would be alright. It would. Really. He had only *almost* died, the last time, out in the water.

“I...imagine I'll be fine! Yes!” he chuckled, pacing anxiously around on the miniature island Dragonite had become. “Hold tight, both of you! And please, sir, keep those pokeballs safe!”

“Keep them?” Anders started, as Figment thudded across Dragonite, “Don't you want me to let them out, now?”

Instead of answering, Figment took a deep breath. To Anders, the dragon was all girth and power and might; just breathing in forced his plated pectorals to blow out loudly, raw power filling his massive violet biceps...and yet, for a moment, he saw borderline terror on the dragon's muzzle as he lowered himself grudgingly down into the waters.

Just hold her tight, Blair told Figment. *You didn't have anybody, back then, remember?*

“Yes, yes,” Figment muttered, agreeing with that part of himself, or trying to, as the frigid waters consumed his feet, then his rear and tail, then his torso, freezing his warmth and resolve. “Just...put it to use, yes? Hehe! Energy from cold...translating into motion, dynamics...”

He muttered away, science-ing as hard as possible against the stabbing dread that picked at his mind as he kicked his mighty legs and feet, paddling forward. A dagger of ice sank into his brain as the water overtook him, making Figment thrash in place, before forcing himself to calm down, and push forward, against every screaming instinct inside...

“No, I don't want him up here,” President Stone shouted into the speaker he held, as he paced about the console. “I don't care! You think I want him involved in this madness? Keep him out, at all costs! No force, just...lock him out!”

Stone gathered up countless hours of agony and fear and pocketed it, for the hundredth time. He was getting pretty good at it, even if a bit late in the game.

“That's *nine* minutes, passed,” he continued, staring outside, just as the three pokemon subjects were strapped into their containment cages along the perimeter of the reactor. “Good! Get the absorber online, full charge. How much Infinity Energy do we need, to get minimal effect from the rocket?”

“It'll take all eight tanks, for minimum energy dispersal, sir...” the operator spoke.

“Ah, curse it all. Down to the wire, in every last way, is it?”

“We'll be starting with these three...let's see, a Snorlax, an Infernape, and... a Tyranitar. Okay. These three have proven to have the most stamina, and we have six Dynamax prototypes ready. We'll supersize these three, sap their upgraded powers, and then swap out the next wave, while we start recharging the first Dynamax balls. This should give us the most efficient rotation cycle, as well as the most...endurance, on their parts...”

“Understood. Well, the cages seem big enough. Doesn't matter, I suppose. As long as the floor and wall sensors keep draining their life force, it doesn't matter what holds them, at whatever size—”

A shadow consumed the darkening skies, silent and swift. Both parties stopped cold as an utterly enormous Charizard descended, crashing down into the only wide-enough open space on the rig to accommodate him: the reactor floor. His massive feet settled near the three cages, shaking them, startling the subjects within as much as the humans.

All parties watched, transfixed, as Leon peered down into their window, casting the interior in shade. Eyes bigger than homes loomed on the other side of the windows, a muzzle wider than their combined width blasting it with air.

“I think...he's *smelling* for us, sir...”

“The eye color...” President Stone muttered, pondering. “There's no way...Leon? Is that Anders' Charizard!? Look at him, his body...it must be! He's undergone the same changes as those dragons in the officer's report! How in the world...”

“Yes, sir...to see him up close...it's remarkable...”

“Stun him! Stun him, right now! Use everything we have, down there, full blast! ”

Leon motioned, pointing his massive claws out to the ocean, looking to it, then back at the window, pleading at every imaginable turn for help.

“RRRRRHRRUR! RRR!”

“Sir, there's no way Anders will condone—”

President Stone's hand was already on the necessary button, his face sympathetic and grave. It was one more needle on a stack of regrets, but the stack didn't budge, and neither would he.

“Sir!”

“I know. I'm sorry. If he makes it, see to it that he's given every possible comfort, in retirement. Bless you, Leon, and your sacrifice!”

The massive Charizard perked to attention, turning from the window. He had seen Stone hit a button through the panel, and was now questioning what exactly the series of flipping glass discs along the reactor floor were. Unfortunately, he got his answer.

As he regarded the discs a moment, then waved frantically back to the ocean, a horde of blue electric bolts snapped to life, crackling and snarling, lancing Leon's three-hundred foot tall form with so much shock power that even the muscular titan staggered back. Massive feet slammed backwards as the Charizard pitched, his gigantic body waving right, in slow motion.

Another wave burst off, and Leon's vision gave out. The last thing he saw was Stone, his hand on the button, not an emotion to be found. Confusion gave way to frustration, which was crushed by a dawning rage, before Leon passed out and slammed down on the reactor with a quaking *boom*.

“Father!” the intercom buzzed, static clearing away. “What is this!? I saw everything from the cafeteria balcony, down here! Everything overlooks the reactor—what did you do to Leon? Explain!”

President Stone sagged for one heavy moment, then straightened up.

“You shouldn't have been here, Steven,” Stone Sr. Spoke, as his son clutched the comm unit, pacing about the cafeteria. “You were supposed to be enjoying your stadium match. It *was* a charity event, wasn't it? How did it go?”

“The match was canceled, when the new pokeballs produced dragon-types so big they destroyed the entire stadium,” Steven replied, as calmly as he could. Neither side yelled. Neither side needed the theatrics. “But those prototypes weren't actually supposed to go out, were they?”

“...No. You weren't supposed to get those. No one was. We've been hit by a coordinated sabotage campaign. Those were stolen, and a cargo ferry was just sunk, as well, en route to here. You...likely have heard the rumors about our Delta project, yes? You can just say so, I know that word gets out to some degree.”

Steven paused, lowering the speaker, as he observed at least a dozen manned bulldozers cranking out to collectively push Leon's body over the largest sensor plates along the reactor floor. He brought the speaker back up.

“I didn't think they were true.”

“Then, you know why this is happening.”

“...The meteor.”

“Grand Meteor Delta, correct. You might know of it, but not its dimensions. It's massive, Son. It reaching us would mean complete eradication. All of us. You must also know about Infinity Energy.

Listen. There's a rocket fixed to intercept Delta. There is no payload great enough to safely detonate Delta. We're instead mounting a payload of Infinity Energy, in order to tear a hole in space, and let Delta pass through it. That Infinity Energy...it comes from pokemon. But, to get enough energy, we would need either an army of them...or a few ultra-massive, high-vitality ones.”

Steven stopped pacing. He had been looking through the cafeteria window, out into the evening sky; by the end, however, he was staring back down at Leon.

“I don't like it. But, either we sacrifice some, or all. I didn't want that burden resting on you.”

Something massive climbed up the building's exterior scaffolding, the vibrations getting more and more pronounced, until Toothless's gigantic muzzle and fins peered up into view. His green boulder-sized eyes caught Steven's, and the black dragon nodded for him to open up.

“Steven?” Stone Sr. pressed, hearing no reply, as Steven opened the sliding door.

“What's with him?” Toothless whispered, his voice still huge as he tilted his head over to Leon. “I thought you didn't have dragons that big, in this world!”

“Steven? Answer me, Son.”

Steven put a hand up for Toothless, who shrugged casually, and hung around in place.

“There must be some other way, Father! I've...I know of some foreign creatures, dragons, that have come here from another...well, another dimension...from what I understand, they have a good grasp on dimensional boundaries and travel. If they were to help us...”

“What?” President Stone replied, slowly. “There are others?”

“You know of them?”

“We...had several...on the ferry, before it...”

Steven looked back out to Toothless, innocent and grinning, scratching his chin. He fumbled for the words, maybe for the first time in his life.

“You mean...”

“They were left to their holding tanks. They were too big to get out, once the interior took on water. I'm so sorry.”

“What'll I tell him?” Steven mumbled, more to himself than anyone.

“Who? Is one of them there with you?”

“Sir!” the console tech interrupted, motioning for President Stone to look out the window, over the reactor. “Sorry, but we're ready! Leon's as secured as he can be, and they're bringing out the ball...”

Stone peered closer as a single bulldozer rumbled across the reactor plate, heading towards Leon's unconscious form. In its extended bucket was a monstrous Dynamax ball.

“And this is the new version, the upgrade?” he asked.

“Y-yes, it is. I still think it's unstable...”

“Noted. Do it.”

“Do what?” Steven asked through the speaker, unnerved. “Do *what*, Father?”

“Get back to the boat, Steven,” President Stone ordered, momentarily more boss than parent. “Get Drake to get you far from here, right now. That's a command. Over and out.”

He set the speaker down, paused, then switched it off with his thumb.

“This has to work,” he muttered, as the bulldozer carefully lowered the huge Dynamax ball down, switched gears, then fearfully reversed far, far away.

“This will work,” Figment repeated as he stuffed the pokeballs into his satchel, picked Anders up in one massive hand, and leapt up off of Dragonite's belly. His free hand clutched a lower beam on the rig and he pulled them both up with little effort, given his raw strength. Frankly, Anders couldn't believe something so amazingly built and strong was this...well, *nice*.

“Okay, Figment, whenever you're ready,” Dragonite roared, waiting in the waters below. “I'll be here when you get your friends and Leon back!”

“Right! I'll bring a pokeball for you, so that I can shrink you down afterward!”

Figment deposited Anders gently up onto a walkway, before imagining himself and the satchel smaller and smaller, again. By this point the matter wasn't all that difficult, and in moments he stood tall as Anders himself. The man stepped back, looking Figment's bulky body up and down before shaking his head in resignation, if not acceptance.

“Incredible,” he murmured, rubbing his eyes.

“I try, hehe,” Figment answered.

“First, we need to get several pokeballs, and those would be in storage or R&D. This is...the Eastern annex...so, R&D is the closer pick. Come on, I'll lead you in!”

“Brilliant! Thank you!” Figment chirped, thumping along with him.

“You're thanking me? You're the one that saved my Leon with that last-minute pokeball trick—hey, that's right, wait. Aren't the pokeballs smaller, in there, now?”

He pointed to the sack, and Figment patted it, grinning.

"I suppose so! They and the candies would be subject to my imagination, it appears. But I can imagine them bigger, again, it's not a problem!"

"You...okay, nevermind."

"You see, I'm pure—"

"Nevermind! No sense in talking about it, let's move."

"Oh. Right!"

The silence only got down one hallway, before it failed.

"Wait, candies?" Anders asked, still moving along as he nodded to the satchel. "You have...candy, in there? Seriously?"

"Well, they're subjected to bombardments of dimensional energy, they pack a serious punch. That's how Dragonite wound up so huge and round! It's how we outgrew the ferry, and made it out."

"Boy, our R&D guys would just eat you up," Anders chuckled, humorlessly.

"Oh, no, we're not candies, hah," Figment corrected, the term going right overhead.

It was surprisingly easy to enter the R&D sector. Everyone had been pulled onto new duty at the reactor, apparently in a hurry. All Anders had to do was dry his badge on a sleeve then scan it, and the door slid right open for them.

"Okay, this is it," Anders said. "Get your friends free, and we can move to saving Leon."

"On it!"

Figment looked around, squinted, then jogged off into another area, rummaging about, the candies in his bag rattling around; he hustled over with a stack of pokeballs and laid them all out along a desktop, finishing with the ones they had with them. He stared at the two smaller pokeballs, and Anders withheld a gasp as the dragon grew them both back to normal size.

"You really *can* imagine big. So, what's all this?"

"A bit of a trick," Figment explained, removing the satchel to root around, then add Cynder and Spyro's pokeballs to the lineup. He set them at the beginning of the row then stepped back, cracked his thick purple knuckles, and concentrated.

Anders lurched back as a bright red light flashed within the first two balls, then flashed along the row, sequentially flowing into a crimson streak, over and over again. After a moment it stopped, and the light died out.

Rather than bother asking, he let Figment move to grab the first two balls, then smile as he pressed both their buttons. Out popped Spyro and Cynder with a burst of light, both of whom lay in a haggard heap on the tiling.

“Oh,” Spyro groaned, having to fight just to shake his head. “What hit me?”

Cynder just lay there, tongue out.

“They...shrank down?” Anders started, looking at them, then back to the balls on the desk.

“Who did what,” Spyro muttered, before blinking, then seeing Anders. That did the trick. “YOU! You rotten, no-good, lousy—”

The dragon was up on two hulking legs in a second, and despite being shrunken down to about human size, Spyro easily had the advantage in muscle, all of which angrily advanced on the human.

“Wait, wait, Spyro,” Figment nervously stammered, coming in between the two with a deep hug. “Ah, haha, that's better! It's me! Welcome back!”

Spyro jerked away slightly, paused, then whooped, wrapping Figment in a bear hug that made Anders all the more glad it hadn't been inflicted on him.

“Fig? FIG! Haha, Fig, buddy! Hey! Oh, I couldn't find you anywhere!”

“Same here!” Figment laughed as Spyro playfully shook him by his horns. “I'm just postulating, but I believe we wound up split between pocket dimensions after our exodus, and each one allocated us to an individual subspace sector, in this case—”

“Ugh, the boring science jabber! I *missed* it! You awesome, boring, you...you...*you* be glad he got in my way, you hear!?”

He was very-much pointing at Anders as he finished, before going back to hugging tight on his friend, then setting him down.

“Right, right,” the human muttered, backing up, his arms raised. “Sorry about before.”

“Well, clearly, you know one another,” Figment gathered, rubbing where Spyro had pulled maybe a bit *too* affectionately on his poor horns.

“His pet dragon attacked us when we got free of those funny ball-prisons,” Spyro grumbled, moving in to shake Cynder awake by her thick shoulder.

“He's not a pet!” Anders shot back, riled up enough to back sass such a powerful creature.

“We're actually going to help save him,” Figment sighed, as Cynder stirred awake.

“*You* can,” Spyro growled, as Cynder saw him, then Figment.

“Fig!” she cried, hugging him even tighter, muscle crushing in on muscle. “You're okay! Thank goodness! How did we—”

“Portal separation,” Figment chuckled.

“Where are—“

“Toothless? No sign. Bartok's in another ball, in my bag. He was still growing from the effects of her potion, so I had to shrink him down that same way as you two, and stow him away. Hopefully, old Baba is still somewhere on Bartok.”

“Well, where are—“

“Ocean-based refinery of some sort. Very impressive.”

“Oh—“

“His pet is here, Figment's helping rescue him,” Spyro huffed. “We need to grab all our own, have a huddle, and get out of this nutso world, pronto!”

“He's not a pet! He's my—”

“Comrade,” Figment said, giving the smaller human a nod. “I get it.”

Anders sniffed, quickly, then nodded back. He tried to look half as big as they were.

“Wait, why are we smaller again?” Spyro asked, as it hit him.

“Pokeballs!” Figment explained, folding his massive arms tightly. “I chained portals through them, and taxed your size off, so we could...you know...*open* them, and not destroy the surroundings...”

“Good enough for me,” Cynder sighed. “Which way is the next part of the plan?”

Anders pointed, and the three dragons all hustled along, patting each others' wings and backs, tails tattling on how happy they actually were to be in company again. He sighed, then looked over to the bag, having been left behind in the celebrations.

“Hey,” the human shouted, though not too loud, pulling their attention back as he ran up to Figment and handed him the bag. “You want this, right?”

“Oh, goodness!” Figment yelped, blushing through thick scales. “Of all the stupid...thank you!”

“Holy cow, Fig, Bartok was in there,” Spyro chided, before Cynder thumped him.

“You didn't notice, either.”

Finally, Anders managed a laugh.

“Heh, sure. Been there. It's good.”

Back in R&D, one of the leftover pokeballs rattled as a red light flashed inside. The top half snapped open and with a flash of light, Lucario tumbled out. Her fur had dried all wrong from the ocean water, her ears limp, her muscles shaking. She shook it off, and wobbled up on tired legs.

Oh, she thought, looking around. Oh, thank goodness! Thought I was going to be trapped down there, forever! But what got me free? And where...am I?

She saw the equipment, and her heart sank back down.

What...a lab? This is all marked as Devon property! But, I don't recognize this area...

She coughed, still shaking from the trauma of her underwater escape. Her throat was a desert, by this point, and that candy was still damnably stuck to her tongue. What was it even made of?

Lucario teetered her way over to a nearby vending machine, looked it over, then struck it with a high kick to the side. Several bottled waters tumbled loose, and she wasted no time in grabbing one, popping its top, and sucking the entire thing down.

In so doing the candy finally, grudgingly dislodged, and was swallowed whole.

Ah, better. Better, better! Now, to—

Immediately, it began. A great, all-consuming tension pulled her into a full-body flex, her eyes going saucer-wide before closing tight. The cry hardly made it out of her maw as she doubled over, panting faster, feeling her matted fur bristling out. Her muzzle pushed out longer, her thick dred-like appendages rising behind her head as a set of white horns jutted straight out over them.

Ah!

She thudded on all fours, grunting, as her muzzle kept edging out longer, her teeth pushing larger, thicker. Her shoulders rolled, swelling into greater definition as her chest swelled and her ribs pulled up with it, expanding wider and stronger. Her rear bulged up and out, its ribbon tail bulging with newfound girth, pumping bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

Lucario grit her teeth as a set of cream-colored fins slipped out along a shifting jawline, cresting her cheeks. Her ears rose higher, wider, a spike emerging like a small mountain from the end of her muzzle, going straight up, as her fingers boomed larger, great claws growing from each, her mitts spreading larger over the floor. Both blue haunches trembled, then exploded in size, disproportionately ballooning on either side of her widening hips.

And, she grew. Her normally-child-sized body swelled up and up, blowing up taller, as big as a human, surging wider, stronger, bulking here and there, marrying with her lithe figure and curves before she shook again and blew up twice as big. The floor fracturing under her weight as she moaned, wound up, and doubled in size *again*. Her body billowed uncontrollably into desks, computers and rolling chairs, shoving everything back as a pair of wings shot out her shoulder blades, thumping up into the ceiling as she blew up into it.

Can't...s-stop—

Her thirty-foot body did indeed refuse to stop, or even slow down. Under her newfound size and weight the floor buckled and Lucario howled in shock as she tore through, tumbling down into a basement server room, smashing row upon row of equipment into rubble. She scrambled destructively

for her bearings, knocking machinery flat, all as a readout on the far wall began to change: green energy bars on a monitor pushed unhappily into yellow...then orange...then red...

The door to the cafeteria slid sluggishly open, and after a moment's hesitation Steven stepped out to join Toothless. The giant dragon snuffled him over, his tongue poking partially out as his top fins perked up.

"So, what's the word?" he rumbled, his voice big enough to rattle the balcony. "You okay?"

"Well," Steven coughed, stalling for time. The words were a heavy lift, and he was weak in the knees, suddenly. As he struggled to respond, an interruption arose, and he was thankful for it—for about a second or two.

A violent blast of pink light flared up from the reactor, blinding everyone.

"Whoa!" Toothless said, wincing, as the light overtook everything. Its intensity faded, but the pink hue remained. It saturated the entire reactor, and as he and Steven watched, the color grew darker and deeper, yet. "What was that!?"

"I...I don't know," Steven murmured, as a great and terrible rumbling started up, below.

Leon's entire body, all 300 feet of him, was pulsing with energy as the Dynamax ball had rolled into him, then vanished into light that covered the Charizard in a godly glow. Still asleep, his form began to shudder violently, untold power coursing in, filling him, forcing his bulky brawn to tingle and swell out, and out, and out.

"It's working," President Stone whispered, watching intently from within the control room. "It's working! Start the feed, now, we need every bit of power he's going to generate!"

The console tech flipped a row of switches and pulled a handle towards him, before making an unpleasant face.

"That's...not right," he grumbled, confused. Stone suddenly shared his expression.

"What's not right?"

"The reactor plates also regulate the energy flow," the tech started, doubt starting to creep in. "But the servers underneath R&D are down, somehow, just now. What could have possibly—"

"What's that mean?"

"The servers run the regulators, which have a built-in control parameter program...it keeps the system running at a safe range...at safety numbers they control energy, keep Leon's power surges in check...but they're overheating! If it gets low, they put out enough energy to smother his power surges...medium, they attune and control it...but at this output...they'll...amplify! Sir, we have to abort! Right now!"

"We can't! This is happening, however it happens! Start the feed!"

“It's already running, b-but the Dynamax will get an unthinkable boost! Leon's growth...will be immeasurable! The plates are firing hot, and it's still building! I'm sorry, sir, but I'm cutting this off!”

The consoles crackled with energy, then blew out, knocking the two back. Staff members came running, but a wave of glowing Charizard muscle boomed against the windows, throwing the entire control room into darkness.

Leon was growing, slowly, surely, his girth twitching and bursting in warm waves. His pectorals erupted higher and higher, his shoulders exploding and mashing against their side of the reactor wall. The other pokemon all attacked their cages, forcing their way out and off the reactor floor, just as 400 feet of Leon bulged over everything, shaking and swelling up to 500 feet.

The towering spire at the reactor's center whirred to life as Leon grew and grew against it. It shifted and blossomed open, its long petals pushing out mechanically against the dragon's swelling bicep, only able to extend so far as his muscles billowed and forced them back.

“The Absorber is online, sir!” a staff member shouted through the darkness and confusion, reading a mobile tablet they carried. “It's activating!”

“W...what's the output on the tanks?” he shouted back, even as Leon's growth shook the entire control room. The emergency light flashed red, bathing the room in a sinister portent, yet Stone stubbornly floundered over to the mobile tablet, snatching it.

“T-they're filling, fast! We're already at tank 5!”

“What!?” Stone balked, seeing for himself. “In less than a minute!? Amazing! Haha, we've done it! The rocket is set to auto-pilot, once the tanks hit capacity! That gives it more time to take off and create the dimensional opening! It should have more time to widen out!”

“That was projected to take over an hour, just to get to tank 4, sir! This is *not* amazing, it's terrifying! Leon's power is increasing too much, too fast!”

Stone checked a sensor readout on the device, flicking the screen up with his fingers.

“It's under control! He's...600 feet! That's massive, yes...but nothing we can't contain here!”

“You don't understand, sir—this is...just...the adjustment phase! He hasn't *started* growing, for real! We need to evacuate! With the plates malfunctioning, and increasing his Dynamax more and more, it'll be...exponential growth, sir!”

“A small price to pay, to save the world!” Stone countered, as the rumbling grew worse and worse. Sirens began blaring far and near across Neo Mauville, but the tech's words still won out:

“Sir! Leon is about to *be* the end of the world!”

“Tanks 1-8 at full capacity!” another staff member roared, as the shaking grew even worse. “The rocket is auto-engaging, off the West dock! Launch is scheduled at C-minus ten minutes!”

“Already!?”

“No!”

“Sir! We need to e-evacuate, immediately!”

Stone just stood there, unblinking, processing. He fumbled only a moment, before forcing himself to turn around and face his men.

“Evacuate Neo Mauville! Everyone goes!”

Steven hollered something indecipherable as the cafeteria balcony shuddered, then warped into a tilt. Toothless snatched him up and took to flight as it broke away and fell. The entire sector cracked and shifted off its foundation, blowing out great blasts of steam as Leon's outer thigh collided with it, growing uncontrollably, plowing through the base and smashing into its feeble exterior walls.

Toothless had the boy safe in the air, flying up and away from the reactor, watching as a pink-glowing Leon rose up from the destruction, a 700-foot colossus, throbbing with power. His eyes opened wide and empty, washed out by the eerie glow of energy. He twisted in his seat, crushing the overwhelmed Absorber against his growing hips as he sat upright, trembled...and *exploded* bigger. His maw opened painfully wide as he bellowed, shaking and rumbling and detonating up to 1,400 feet in height! His rump and bloating tail cracked the whole plate as the sensors all glowed brighter, going further into deregulated overdrive. Their power fed his as the glow increased, making Leon roar in a deep rage, thrashing his colossal muscles about.

“There's no way they planned for this to happen, right?” Toothless gulped, flapping farther back in the air as Leon towered higher and higher over the rig's center.

“N-no, never!” Steven shouted, holding on to Toothless' gigantic paws. “This is all wrong! Leon sounds so...enraged!”

“They must have really ticked him off, then, because he sounds like doomsday!”

“We...we need to land back on Drake's ship! The Tidal!”

“Got it, we're going! Hang on!”

The East sector shook in a singular and bizarre heave of motion. Spyro, Figment, Cynder and Anders all collectively rode the pulse out, then froze. There was a moment of cautious silence.

“That was odd,” Anders mumbled, looking them over, looking the hallway over, as a parade of unsettled dust relocated South. “Any ideas what that was, Science-guy?”

“Heh,” Spyro chuckled, liking the term.

“A tremor? Out at sea?” Figment mused, before the entire building lurched and canted, throwing the team into the wall, burying Anders in muscle and scales. “Ah! Multiple ones, no less!”

“*Less* would be great,” Spyro grumbled, moving along the tilting span of the wall. To the human's confusion, Spyro and Cynder began to grow, then shrink, pushing and pulling a bit, as their absorption powers began to sluggishly react. “Whatever it is, it's getting worse!”

“We should get outside, or at least up to higher ground!” Cynder suggested.

“Yeah, agreed,” Anders wheezed, squeezing his way around their collective bulk. “It's not far to the fire exit, come on!”

The comfort of freedom was muffled considerably by what awaited them, up on the exit pathway. Rounding the building's side as it cracked and snapped and slid further apart, they teetered and pulled and struggled their way to the roof, only to see a vast wall of glowing salmon-colored muscle pushing higher and higher into the sky.

“What in the world?” Spyro gawked, looking up, and up, and up.

“Leon!” Anders nearly screamed, taking off across the tilting rooftop.

“That's...his dragon!” Cynder gasped, backing up. “Spyro, look, it's the same energy as when he attacked us and grew bigger! Dyna...something...”

“He's getting *that* kind of power-up!?” Spyro whined, genuinely upset.

Leon *was*, and then some. The Charizard was already half a mile tall, his expanding thighs and rear crushing the reactor, the Absorber, and the surrounding buildings into the sea as he trembled horribly, snarled, and boomed up to a full mile's size. Within less than a minute's time, Leon was eighteen times larger, and the growth rate was clearly accelerating as more and more energy crackled along his overgrown biceps and pectorals, his laterals inflating so large that they pushed his wings back as they grew into the air.

Neo Mauville was large—vast, even. Yet, Leon was starting to wear the entire structure like a seat, the colossus exploding larger, his muscles erupting startlingly huge, swollen so far out that he was half as wide as he was, tall. Veins bulged everywhere as the glow only continued to increase, the ocean starting to rumble and vibrate ominously around his looming, bulky body.

As Dragonite rocked in the water she looked up over the edge of the rig and saw Leon's vast head and horns rising higher and higher into the heavens. She hollered, but was interrupted by the fleeing of a small armada of boats, jet skis, and the S.S. Tidal, all at top speed.

“You fool,” Drake growled, watching through the Tidal's bridge windows as Leon's glowing form blew up to 2 miles, a cloud of destruction and waves blowing out around his legs and seat. “Can't we contain him in a pokeball? Something? Anything!?”

President Stone sagged in his chair, behind Drake, mute.

“And to Leon, of all pokémon!” he continued, shaking his head sourly. “A dragon as fine and strong as him! He doesn't deserve that, Stone!”

“Brace!” a deckhand shouted as a rolling wave crashed into the armada, tossing them into a slow, hard pitch. Steven burst through the Bridge door, wheezing, as Toothless could be seen flying back towards the ruined rig, in the distance.

“Steven!” Stone finally spoke, racing to his son. “I...I'm so sorry...”

“Toothless is going back, to see if his friends are still there,” Steven said, catching his breath.

“Who? That black dragon? He saved you, then?”

“Waves, off the port!”

A much larger wave rolled in, fast. Everyone braced again, Stone covering Steven in a futile protective gesture, when the wave suddenly broke, splitting into a fork around the Tidal. Everyone on board looked out and saw a Dragonite so big, they could only see portions of a vast, balloon-like belly, stretching scales filling their peripheries.

“We...would have capsized, for sure!” Drake muttered, before exiting the Bridge.

He went to the railing, then peered high as he could, before laughing, and waving his hat.

“Haha! Oh, looks like I owe you again, darling!” he shouted, as Dragonite let the waves break against her humongous body, sparing the armada their wrath. She loomed high and wide, a blown-up, island-sized dragon, her muzzle lowering in the air as she sighed in relief, and smiled.

“RRRRRRRRRRRR!”

Drake was beaming, underneath the mustache.

“I don't know how you got so all-fired *big*,” he sighed, “probably the same way that other dragon blew up in my poor stadium...but this time, I'm sore-glad you did, girl. That's twice you saved this old dog's skin. God, I love dragons.”

“Candies,” Spyro shouted, as the topside of the Eastern wing cracked in two, then four. “Fig, quick, candies! I dunno this world so well, but we're usually the ones equipped to stop these things!”

“At least we didn't cause this one,” Cynder added, sincerely. “But he's right, Fig! Let's get big!”

“At the rate he's growing, we really don't have any other recourse,” Figment agreed, reaching into the bag as Leon's roar began to shake the ocean and skies. By the time he had its flap open, the rumbling Charizard blasted out with an even wilder burst, exploding to 4 miles in height!

“I'll take a green one!” Spyro said. “I'm not letting that dragon out-bulk me! You know what, just gimme a handful of them!”

“I'll see what I can do,” Figment murmured, before Leon's background-filling body became the foreground, his growing sides colliding with their building, breaking it apart on contact, his brawn

swelling furiously as it mowed through brick and mortar and steel like nothing.

Anders, having run off, was thrown clear from the ledge. As the three dragons skidded back along the toppling roof the human went flying over the demolished rig, howling and flailing—only to feel himself land in a wall of soft, scented fur, so big that he easily rolled along it. He'd have fallen off, had a huge, gentle paw not thumped down to pin him to safety.

“Oh!” he groaned, realizing he wasn't dead yet. He looked up, and his relief melted into severe puzzlement. “W...what...”

I have you! It's okay!

Anders grimaced, wincing a bit, as the voice boomed huge and strong in his mind. Big or not, however...it was a voice he knew. An old, familiar...precious voice.

“You...” he started, before tearing up, unable to stop.

Haha...me! A lot of me!

As the roof shattered apart, and as the last of the annexes, wings and sub-sectors of Neo Mauville fell to the waves, the three dragons leapt. The candies Figment had managed to grab stayed in his closed hand as they all unfurled their wings and took to awkward, unready flight.

“I've got them!” Figment huffed, waving his balled fist in the air.

“That's great, Fig,” Cynder hollered over the rolling destruction around them, “let's have them! We need to stop that dragon, fast! He's growing at an insane pace, look!”

Leon roared even louder, throwing his mighty chest out as it rumbled and burst twice as huge, pumping and swelling out ahead of him. His back erupted into a straining field of muscles, his shoulders booming into small planetoids around a swelling neck as his eyes glowed brighter, and he stretched and groaned and heaved up to 8 miles in height. His shoulders and chest spanned over 4 miles' in diameter as his rump sank deeper through the smashed rig, crushing it into the ocean's depths.

The displaced waters were so high that the waves broke all the way up to Dragonite's shoulders, making the massive behemoth roar in surprise. Still, she protected the fleeing armada, letting the pushing waters shove them all to safety that much faster.

From the shores of Ever Grande City and all along the Hoenn coastline, the pink glow began to spread. Windows opened, cars stopped, and the streets filled with onlookers (pokemon and human alike), all of them seeing a vast dragon swelling over the ocean.

“We're going to tire out, just flying away!” Spyro yelled, over the groaning rumble of Leon's growth. “We need to land soon, and I don't see any land to land on!”

Figment was already feeling around in the bag, mid-flight. It didn't help his flying improve any. He pulled out a last pokeball, imagined it bigger, until it fit his hand. Then, it continued to grow, swelling too large to hold.

“What're you doing?” Cynder wondered, as Figment let it drop.

“We can't land on Dragonite,” Figment said, as the ball splashed down into the ocean, floated there, and blew up even bigger, and bigger, and bigger. “You'll sap her size, after enough contact! We need our own place to land!”

“Who's Dragonite?” Spyro asked, before seeing the massively blimped dragon down in the waters below, shielding the Devon fleet and the Tidal. “Oh!”

“How much did we miss?” Cynder wondered as the high-tech pokeball beneath them rumbled and swelled even larger, growing from a ball to a boulder, then big enough to fill a stadium.

The trio dropped down onto it, the ball so huge that its spherical nature wouldn't cause too much rolling in the waves. The topside was close to flat as they thudded down, tired, but secure. Spyro put a clawed hand on Figment's head, and ruffled on his scales happily.

“Quick thinking!” he laughed, wagging his powerful tail. “Where'd you even get a ball, in the first...wait...you said you had one that was holding...Bartok!?”

He looked down, and went pale.

“Er, Fig, didn't we already establish a certain *problem* Bartok was having? Like, he was unable to stop growing? And, on top of that, you just made his ball hundreds of times bigger...”

“I know, I do—but he's still inside, it should be okay,” Figment said, popping his back. “Oh, flying that much is hard!”

You're telling me!

Surprisingly, a fourth dragon landed, throwing their balance—one they had never seen before, ever. The combination of power and curves suggested a female, and the kindly voice ringing through Figment's thoughts made him light up.

“Lucario!” he shouted, thudding over the topside of the massive pokeball, to look up at her. “You changed! You...ooh, you got pretty big!”

The furred dragon smiled wide, her lengthy neck curving as she chuckled. Anders slid down onto the surface off of her black paw, her newly-minted wings folding back behind her as she took a four-legged seat, and snuffled Figment over gladly.

I suppose I did! It...it is a bit odd, being taller than everyone!

“Wow,” Spyro started, coming up beside them. “Who is this, Fig? I've never seen a dragon like...wait. Fur. Scales? She's like Bartok, sort of...”

“Good guess, heh,” Figment replied, nodding. “She took Baba's special dragon candy, I think! It's the only explanation I've got on hand. I'm so glad you're alright! Though, I admit, I'm somewhat surprised you aren't considerably bigger! That candy was powerful!”

“Your candy did this to her?” Anders balked. “S...she's a dragon, now!”

I am! Anders wasn't prepared for it. Neither was I! And yes...it was tough getting off the ship, she sighed, as Spyro and Cynder watched in silence. I made it to a pokeball, to save myself from drowning, but the ball settled at the bottom of the ocean, and I was stuck...until a red portal opened up, inside, and I took a risk and went into it...

“Goodness,” Figment said, thinking quickly. “The shrinking trick I pulled on Spyro and Cynder...if you wound up here...then, you went through a portal that I must have incidentally opened!”

So, you saved me, Lucario warmly thought, wagging her massive furry tail.

“Uh, Fig, are you two okay?” Spyro began, worried.

Lucario blinked, then saw them, and blushed.

Ah, forgive me! Hello to you! You must be Figment's friends—

“Gah!” Spyro bellowed, lurching away, trying to pinpoint the voice.

“H-hello,” Cynder spoke, giving a polite bow. “I'm sorry to cut the introductions, but...”

“No, she's right,” Figment concluded, “Leon needs to be stopped! We need a plan...Cynder, Spyro, you two have the absorption powers...that means we need you to be the biggest!”

Spyro perked right up.

“About time! I'm up for a rematch!”

“Don't hurt him!” Anders pleaded, walking up to Spyro, hands out. There was no anger or debate in him, this time, it was entirely begging. “Look, please, this isn't his fault!”

Leon's roar burst across the sky as the quaking reptile billowed even bigger, swallowing more and more of the horizon. His thighs were already rising back up out of the ocean itself, too big to fit, the pokemon god ascending to a staggering 16 miles' height. His head shot up through the darkening cloud banks, thunder rumbling about, lightning snapping and licking his oversized muscles. Over 80,000 feet of power trembled as Leon huffed out, sparking contrails of neon energy, before he grit his teeth and blew up to 32 miles, doubling in size again! Passing planes swerved off course, desperate to avoid the sheer wall of scales, as his abdominals loomed over them. Clouds parted as Leon's mountainous muzzle pushed through the atmosphere and beyond, his bulk straining as it blew out even greater, and greater...

“Hold on!” Cynder shouted, as the pokeball, Dragonite, and the fleet were all hurled away by displacing waves. It was unfortunately enough to put the balancing pokeball into a spin, making the four dragons (and one human) scramble to stay topside as it did.

Figment stumbled over himself when the ball pitched back, fully righting itself; the bag whipped over his bulk, the flap still open—and the candies went spilling out, down into the ocean.

“No!”

Figment moved to grab them, but Spyro, of all present, dragged him back.

“Leave em!” he ordered, his muscles straining to contain Figment's. “They're gone!”

“But—”

“I know, Fig! I want them, too! But, they're gone!”

He opened his hand, and Spyro, Cynder and Lucario all saw: Figment was holding three candies. One, blue-green, one blue-black, another green-gold. The bag was empty, otherwise.

“No matter where we go, next,” Figment sighed, “these are it.”

The impact of Leon's bellow finally reached them, and the world convulsed.

“Then this will have to count,” Cynder shouted over the raging noise.

The pokeball shook slightly as a fifth dragon landed on it, shaking everyone to attention.

“Finally!” Toothless boomed, the 50-foot giant huffing as he let his wings rest. He loomed over everyone, even Lucario, her 30-foot self reaching all the way up to Toothless' polished ebony chest. “I've been looking all over for you! Whew!”

“Toothless!” Cynder and Figment cheered, hugging his gigantic thighs. Spyro just walked over, slapping him on the shin playfully.

“Hey!” Spyro laughed, patting thankfully on his bulk. “Glad you made it!”

Toothless beamed down at him over his massive pecs.

“I'm fine, sure! I don't know about this world, though...so! Candies, yeah? We're going to get super-huge and take that dragon down a peg, right?”

“We're not *hurting* him, we're just going to stop his growth,” Figment corrected, before Anders could again protest. “We shrink him down safely, then we open a portal and get out of here!”

“Portals, that's right!” Toothless gasped, thinking back. “Figment, wait—I heard, back on that big ocean fortress...someone was telling somebody I was protecting something important-sounding, I heard it through the glass: these humans are going to launch something called a rocket up, to stop something called a memor...medeor?”

“A meteor!?” Figment gulped. “A meteor is on a collision course, here!?”

“A big one, yeah! Something called Infinity Energy is on the rocket, and when it gets high up enough, it'll...well, do something, and make a hole in the heavens! A dimension-thing-hole!”

“A portal,” Figment mumbled, narrowing his eyes. “Gracious, a portal in space! A dimensional

portal...like mine! Every portal I tried to open here only opens inside of pokeballs, in subspace...out here, I can't manage them. Meaning...heh. Hehe. Toothless, you're wonderful!"

Toothless laughed, shrugging his huge shoulders.

"Well."

"You're thinking, if we get him through that portal," Cynder began.

"Yes, yes! If we can get him and ourselves into it...we can tax him down to something manageable, exactly!"

"But then, he'll be along for the ride with us," Spyro added.

"We'll work that out later," Figment said, whispering that part a bit more carefully. "Spyro, Cynder, I'll need you on full draining duty! Toothless, you—"

"What do the candies do?" Anders asked, cutting them all off a moment, as Leon's swelling echoed everywhere.

"Well, the blue-green is for size increase, and muscle...the blue-black is size, plus elemental absorption growth...and the green and gold is for muscle, and man-like bodily conversion..."

"That must be what Leon got," Anders thought. "Okay! Give Toothless here the blue-black one, please! I need his help!"

"Y..you do?" Figment asked, taken aback.

"Give him that one, and give my Lucario here...that blue-green one! Please, part with those two, keep that other one for yourselves! Just, trust me, I'm trying to repay you!"

"No way," Spyro spat, glowering, as he rounded Toothless' huge leg. "This creep couldn't possibly have a plan that fast! Besides, Fig, you said it yourself: we need the power-up most of all!"

"Oh, no," Anders said, calmly reaching into his pocket. "For you, I have something way, way better. Consider it my apology gift..."

Anders pressed something, somewhere, and a Dynamax ball swelled up, overflowing his palm. Spyro kept his grimace...but his eyebrows went sky-high.

"Oh-ho! Apology accepted! Good luck, Toothless, Lucario! Go get 'em!"

"Why this way, though?" Figment rightly asked, as the seas churned from Leon's stretching growth. He had to shout as politely as possible over the rising, rubbery pull of scales, as the Charizard loomed nearer, and nearer.

"Trust me! We need to move, he's getting bigger, faster!"

Figment looked to Cynder, remembering her old request. She smiled, and nodded.

“Ah...o-okay! I had best take the last one, then...”

Figment handed both candies over, willingly, Anders proffering a quick, thankful bow. He motioned for Toothless to pick him up, which he did, as he tossed a candy over to Lucario, who snapped it in her jaws, without swallowing.

“Lucario...you know Leon, like I do,” Anders shouted from Toothless's thick arms. “Try and talk him down! Get as big as you can, just in case! You know what Leon's like when he's angry!”

Yes, of course! She replied, nodding. *S...stay safe!*

“Yeah. Yeah, you too!”

The trio rode out the rocking of the ball beneath them as Toothless took to flight, then Lucario.

Good luck, you three!

“You too!” Figment shouted, waving, before turning to Spyro and Cynder. “Okay...here we go!”

“What about the Dyna-whatever?” Spyro asked, before a large glowing ball arced through the air, smacking him on the back.

“Goodness,” Figment chirped, tarrying a moment. Cynder was already flying away.

“Figment, move!” she shouted as Spyro shut his eyes, flared with pink energy, and instantly boomed larger...and larger...and larger...

Both Cynder and Figment took to the air as the massive pokeball pitched, due to Spyro's sudden, surging growth. Much the same as Leon, Spyro huffed and trembled, his bright body rapidly blowing up to 100 feet...200 feet...300...house-sized feet blew up into mansions as he rumbled madly, his musculature pumping out wider, stronger; slatted pectorals boomed and creaked as they heaved up into his chin. Biceps too big to fit somehow swelled even greater, his scales groaning happily as he quaked and snorted, nuzzling down into his chest in solidarity, coaxing it *bigger*.

“He's really taking off!” Figment said, flapping a bit more awkwardly towards Cynder.

“He's as happy as possible, trust me,” she chuckled. “Let's move!”

They hardly had to go to Leon. As it happened he had arrived, on his own growth. Both dragons turned to see the mountainous sea of orange bulging forth as it collided with them both. Spyro was stretching up past 600 feet, then 700, starting to slip off of the massive pokeball, before the impact of Leon's growth spurt pushed them away, as well. Spyro tumbled into the sea, still quaking with delight, uncaring, as he trembled and boomed *massively*, underwater...

Leon rampaged and raged, eyes wide and glowing, his powers exploding too fast to contain. Great belts of energy whipped and snarled about him, his neck more than twice as thick as his head, his shoulders over-swelling to madness on either side. His wing muscles bulked and surged, the

membranes straining, his tail pushing back through an ocean that couldn't even hold his massive legs. Vast toes and mighty claws towered up over whole islands as the Charizard's swollen chest inflated monstrously, until even he couldn't have fully reached them, with both bulging arms.

64 miles of dragon spasmed and condensed, even as his muscles stretched bigger, in the moment of anticipation—before Leon *screamed* larger, detonating in ugly, thick, hot bursts, blowing up past 128 miles...then doubling that...

The innumerable specks on land fled the cities along the coastline, frantically filing out through choked streets; the sky beyond them was orange and pink now, the glow only intensifying as it dyed the world in strange hues. Ships at sea tried to steer off and away as individual scales grew larger than them, pulling higher and wider into the air as the ocean shuddered in terror.

Against all of that bulk, all that godhood and growth, Cynder roared. Clinging reflexively to Leon, she was already locked into a forced absorption, and Figment could only watch as the dragoness blasted up bigger. Figment latched onto Leon as well, and violently imagined he could absorb, to the best he possibly could. Astonishingly, his tiny body began surging up as his lavender muscles exploded with renewed power.

“Ah! G-good! Cynder! H-how's it going?”

“I...I've g-got...hah, t-thissss...”

She snarled until her gums showed, her eyes slitting, as just a fraction of Leon's growing power fed her body into a volcanic geyser of growth. She hiccuped bigger, blowing up to 300 feet, instantly, then 700, growing so furiously that her muscles billowed up into hills. Her back swelled too large, even as she blew past 1,000 feet, before their pressurized growth bulged back down into the rest of her, her bust ballooning flat and tight against Leon as they grew and grew. Her tail jerked, half-thrashing, half wagging as she panted and groaned, then blew up to half a mile, then 2 miles! Energy gathered and snaked along her as she swelled from a speck, to a tick, against his sky-sized self.

“B-better do my p-part, then!” Figment shouted, himself at 600 feet, as he looked up along the vast height of Leon's sheer face of scales and sinew, rising up above. “We're winning! We're winning! Look at that, he's shrinking! Imagine that! I can see it! I can s...see it!”

As Leon billowed up into space, his 512-mile body sitting atop the curvature of the planet, Figment's imagination seemed slow to take hold. Nearly three million feet of orange brawn shuddered into the heavens as his immense rear swelled across the ocean floor. Floodwater rushed the coast, having no place else to go, as the cloud banks submissively played about his ankles and toes.

Leon seemed to stop growing for a moment, halting his verticality with a grunt. Cynder fed and fed along with Figment, herself swollen up to 10 miles in size, and he to 4; the proverbial spigot turned into a floodgate as the flow finally shifted into her palms, making Cynder's eyes bulge fearfully.

“HMMMM—”

No efforts to brace could blunt the overflow as her body erupted larger, thicker, pouring out to 60 miles, then 200. In seconds her bulk swelled to cover nearly half of Leon's enormous backside as shared power danced and swarmed about both parties, crackling through her huge horns and swollen

breasts. Figment clawed his way up Leon's lake-sized scales, one after the other, making and losing headway as Cynder boomed even bigger.

“KEEP AT IT, Cynder! YOU'RE DOING IT!” Figment hollered, as he ballooned to 30 miles. *“COME ON...HE'S SHRINKING...HE'S SHRINKING...LEON IS SHRINKING!”*

Still, stubbornly, Leon's body puffed out, seeming to strain against the halting. Figment's power worked into the country-sized Charizard, in tandem with his and Cynder's absorption, yet all of it combined was only *barely* enough to hold him as the Dynamax's power escalated.

LEON, STOP!

The voice collided with Leon's rage, pushing against it, forcing its way in as Lucario flew around the titan's muzzle, desperate to get his attention. Being less than a mote of dust in comparison to him however, she found no recourse, but to hover in place and snort.

Nothing. Too small. Here we go, then...

She swallowed the candy, and right away, it hit: the dragonified pokemon's body rumbled, then lurched bigger on one side, her muscles blowing up with definition, before surging to the other side, overflowing that half even more. Bursting waves rocked her body as it swelled with strength, her feral biceps and forearms burgeoning and bloating tighter, heavier. Her wings swelled, flapping to keep her up as she shuddered out to 90 feet...150 feet...400 feet...530 feet...it—it just kept coming!

A...AAAAAAAH, she moaned, *boom-boom-boom-boom-booming* larger.

A speck ballooned into a dot, then a spot, growing into something at least comparable to the Charizard. At 700 feet, she was still only about as impressive as a human on a mountain range...but Leon's growth was finally halting, somewhat, and this was the best shot she was likely to get.

L-LEEEEEONNNN...

Lucario passed the height of a skyscraper, the formerly-tiny creature growing so massive and bulky that her feet alone would have filled city streets. Her back surged with warm girth, shoulder blades pushing out wider, her shoulders expanding, her neck inflating with a rumbling bulge. Her eyes fluttered as she felt herself tighten and swell further, crying out cutely as she passed 1,500 feet.

LEEEEEEOON...LISTEN TO ME! I-IT'S Lucario!

Leon's body strained furiously, demanding to grow onward. Figment felt it push back against his imagination, and the 90-mile dragon doubled down, imagining even more intensely.

“NO...I'M RIGHT,” he insisted as he clung tight, beside Cynder, her body expanding to 300 miles. *“H-HE'S...DEFINITELY SMALLER, YES! G...GAH!”*

Why was he struggling, so? Why was his growth slower? Was it exhaustion? Too many trips to the well? This was only working enough to barely work!

“WHY...ISN'T HE...SH-SHRINKING?” Cynder growled, as the power snapped and burst

over her growing body. She was as big as an entire state, even some smaller countries, and her dark scales and purple plates only grew more and more, the more she took in. ***“HUH, HAAAAH...I’M TAKING AND TUH-TAKING...”***

I’VE MISSED YOU SO MUCH, Lucario sighed, trying to reason through the pleasure and growth, as much as Leon needed to push through his anger and power. Her 2,200-foot body remained a joke in relation to the dragon’s, but she willed herself bigger, pleading with the candy to make her as huge as possible. She had to be bigger! She couldn’t lose him! *CAN’T YOU HEAR ME, DEAR?*

Leon trembled harder, his bulk stretching out in place, screaming for full release...

“This is it,” Anders shouted, patting Toothless’s thick scales as they flew out over a sprawling herd of corporate buildings along the back of the Hoenn coast. “Devon, itself!”

“What’re we doing, here?” the giant dragon asked, as he banked right and lowered down to the complex and its surrounding forests.

“There’s something here that’ll give you a serious edge against Leon,” he shouted over the winds. “But to control it, I need access to...that building, there! Land on it, would you?”

Toothless was already smiling. Anders felt the behemoth’s muscles flex in anticipation.

“Of course!”

A huge *thud*, and there they were. The massive building proved able to sustain his weight well-enough, and off Anders slid, breaking into a run toward the entrance door.

“Just get over to the forest, take the candy, and wait! You’ll know when it hits!”

“You aren’t worried about making me bigger?” Toothless barked, cocking his head curiously.

“We’re all dead, if we don’t try! Might as well go all out!”

The door slammed behind him, and Toothless shrugged his huge shoulders.

“Agreed. Heh.”

Toothless stood waist-high to the forest canopy, upon landing. He turned to stare out over the coast, out to the seas beyond; they had flown several minutes just to reach land, yet Leon’s body remained right there, it was so big. Yet, for how impressively the Charizard filled the horizon, even as his thooming heartbeat echoed across the hemisphere, Toothless could only think one thing:

Spyro’s going to be so jealous—

Or was it ‘envious’? Language was still a bit odd, for him—

A beam of light crashed down, sudden and sharp, stabbing over the forest like a god’s lance. It narrowed into a slender column of energy that soaked directly into the dragon, saturating his black

pectorals, and making his eyes roll so far back they were nearly gone. The candy rolling about in his mouth went straight down as he swallowed hard and let one thing back out.

“AAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Inside of Devon, Anders stood in the North quadrant control room D-4, where the console for the Devon satellite was well-guarded. For a security head, however, getting in was worth less than a yawn. He guided a small lever forward as the machinery hummed and rattled, the beam intensifying.

“Enjoy it,” he muttered, watching the numbers climb on the display. “If Figment was right, and that candy works...you'll absorb every bit of Devon's orbital Infinity Energy beam!”

Through the windows he could see a small black dot in the forest. That dot shot up, swelling so fast, so powerfully, that the forest nearly evaporated under-bulk. Countless trees snapped and bent and cracked, flattening under the expanding plow of Toothless' body as it grew.

In one second, where Toothless had just been, there was now only one foot. Toothless's head punched through the sky as the beam blasted him taller and stronger, his scales struggling to cover his erupting shoulders and inflating triceps. He opened his mouth to gulp the beam up faster, his body swelling up past 500 feet, all in that one moment's time, before booming up to 2,000, the next. Even Anders went quiet at the sight of the dragon shooting up beyond the view of his window, rocketing bigger and bigger. A concussive blast of displaced air slammed Devon as his thighs burst wider, his chest trembling as it heaved out farther, and farther, his muscles all racing one another to be biggest.

S-SO...JEALOOOOOUSSSS

Anders pushed the lever further, until it thumped to a stop, insistent that it was done. The onscreen numbers climbed eagerly as the output climbed past 100%, and kept rising.

One huge leg thudded out over the forests, the other doing the same, as Toothless sank into a wrestling stance, so as to spread his bulk wider as he panted and quaked, then blew up to 3 miles, in one huge blast of growth. His muscles surged so massively that they consumed him, nearly swallowing his head, before it was saved by his neck's exploding width.

120%, the screen said. The supply: 80%.

Toothless shook in blatant rapture as he let his stretching muscles play. At 9 miles his feet cracked the forests, the landmass shattering as his weight swelled too great. His calves exploded loudly, the newest rush of growth blowing up through his expanding thighs, widening hips, lengthening maleness and booming pecs. His tail snaked out happily, traveling the outer roads of the property line as he rose higher and higher over the mountains which framed the coast.

140%. Supply, 70%. The numbers slipped from green to yellow.

Anders was now the best human *anywhere*, as far as Toothless was concerned.

9 miles of muscle would have seemed impossible to contain, let alone to budge—yet, every swollen fiber of muscle buzzed and quaked as Toothless gulped the beam down, bringing hands big enough to crush skyscrapers up to squeeze on his chest. There was no logic to it, Toothless was doing it

just to *feel* them burst even bigger, and bigger, spreading his growing fingers apart, letting raw girth pour between them as he swelled to 30 miles! The clouds scattered, nervous creatures sensing a superior being, allowing his head to push past as green, mile-wide eyes lidded low.

A toe bigger than all of Devon Corp rumbled closer as Toothless felt the ground crumbling dangerously deep. Some better, kinder part of him forced all that girth to step over the skies, microscopically tiny trees and debris raining down as he stepped over entire mountains, down into the sea. Tremors rocked the complex, overhead lights stammering, even shutting down as Anders steadied himself against the console and watched the numbers climb. He guided the beam with a knob, keeping it over Toothless, whom he saw balloon even bigger, via numerous remote monitor feeds.

The black dragon's hands slipped down, rubbing tight over his groaning muscles, determined to feel himself getting bigger at every possible turn. Fingers so wide one could walk on them like a bridge squeezed and prodded, tracing one mounding peak of a bicep, the other tickling over an explosively growing lateral. Despite the doom inherent, for a minute, Toothless was in heaven.

180%. 40%.

Toothless was already so big, Anders couldn't make him out, from Devon. To him—to *anyone* stuck on the landscape below—there were just polished scales everywhere. They blotted out Leon, swapping one set of growing muscles for another, and as Toothless grunted, shivered, and blew up past 70 miles, that only got worse.

250%! 25%!

“Come on, you pile of muscles, grow,” Anders urged, as the alarms began to shout out everywhere, the lights failing. “Just...don't be too hard on my Leon!”

130 miles...

Toothless's bulk exploded out of control, his arms ballooning so large and full that they were actually difficult to lift. His shoulders blew up against his bursting neck, a symphonic sea of scales pulling and mashing and bloating into each other; he closed his eyes and felt his chest grow up over his muzzle as his back blew out, spreading his shoulders and pushing them forward.

310 miles...

300%! 10%!!

500 miles. Toothless was 500 miles tall—over 2.6 million feet of bulk. Even the fastest Devon vehicle would have needed, what...8 hours, to drive from his toes to his head fins? His thick heels sank into the ocean floor, torturing what was already holding Leon, each one so big that they could have made a small island. Palms that could have scooped and held an entire lake busied themselves, playing with his tight abs, his triceps small continents unto themselves.

Today *really* hadn't been so bad.

400%. From orange to pure death-red. 5%...

600 miles...

4%...

750 miles...

3%...

940 miles...

Anders saw the scale readouts and backed away, gasping.

“Oh,” he whispered, awestruck. Perhaps, even, afraid. “He's...*bigger* than Leon!”

2%...

1,100 miles...

1%...

1,350 miles...

Imagination was Anders' only friend, and it was out in full as he pictured Toothless looming over the countryside. Had he gone too...eh, who was kidding who, of course he had. But, Leon...

0%.

The screen flickered sickly, before an emergency warning flashed over it, blinking in the dark.

Outside, Toothless...well, Toothless *was* the outside.

The beam cut off, leaving Toothless huffing and shaking in place. His vast feet dug into the ocean as he licked his muzzle over, then snorted out a great blast of smoke. He slowly reared himself up, heavy, so very heavy...but so powerful...

“THIS WORKS!” he boomed, his voice a rolling cataclysm of thunder and bass.

Sitting down, as he was, Leon rose about 260 miles off the world and its problems, his city-sized head dominating its thermosphere. Both godly legs extended out across the sea, past a neighboring peninsula and its family of smaller islands. His rump rested, nearly state-sized, his scales as big as towns, each gleaming claw a mountain. The largest of all pokemon would have constituted a microbe, at best.

And yet, over on Hoenn's Western coast, Toothless stood bigger. Much, much bigger. So far as the world was concerned, the hulking ebony dragon *was* the coast.

All that mass, all that earth-cracking weight slowly turned, rattling and shaking the countryside and sea as he simply stepped in place, looking back over shoulder muscles so huge, even *he* had to

crane his bloated neck. There Leon was, too busy roaring and raging, too caught up in his anger and power to even bother standing, like a massive child under a tantrum's sway. At his staggering height, Toothless easily saw Cynder bulging up in size, behind Leon, working her humongous bulky arms steadily around his huge waist, getting a steady grip going.

All the better, then, he figured.

I KNOW I LOOK DIFFERENT, Lucario pleaded, her gargantuan dragon-body still bursting bigger in the air, making her flap harder to stabilize as she boomed to 3,000 feet, then a whopping mile. *AAAH, I...I-NEED YOU TO HEAR ME! PLEASE!*

Leon stared ahead, past her, seeing only red. His muzzle swung open, and for a sweet, cruel second, Lucario dared to hope it was in answer. What answered, however, was a writhing pillar of flame as the Charizard bellowed out a blaze of hate, which narrowly missed as Cynder forced all of Leon back with a hard pull. The skies lit into near-white as his thick neck arched up and away, Cynder's biceps and forearm around it, wrangling Leon back.

Lucario wavered and tumbled into the waters, rolling back and spluttering up to the topside. Even then she swelled larger, trembling and groaning, as she felt herself billow out against the cool waves, swelling to 6,000 feet. Even Dragonite's huge bulk was forced farther off as her struggles and growth pushed more water out around her, around the fleet she shielded.

If the world had gotten surreal in the last several minutes, then the sight of Cynder straining to pull all of Leon out of the ocean, lift him overhead, and body slam his mass back into the sea was proof that it was now completely insane. Her 400-mile body swelled as she sent him to impact, tossing the waters into a frenzy of motion, then welled up and blasted a column of dark fire down onto him, battering the Charizard god. Figment leapt into the air, clearing Leon's body before landing and hugging his 120-mile bulk against hers.

Despite the mighty blast Leon's last vestiges of restraint snapped, and the tremendous dragon's pent-up growth finally burst through, erupting, as he bellowed underwater and grew, and grew, ballooning rapidly under her mass. Waves of growth undulated at frantic speeds through his hide, his muscles bursting clear of the ocean, shoving Cynder as she cried out and rode them up, up, and up.

A great glowing muzzle shot up from the depths and kept rising, followed by massive glowing eyes and lengthy horns as Leon emerged, already 800 miles tall, to Cynder's 600. By the time she flipped backwards and rolled down his midsection, he was 1,600 miles. His legs swelled out and out, wider and larger and heavier, his heels cracking the crust of the planet as they plowed through entire countries. Clouds parted meekly about his heels as scales big enough to fill the skies loomed over countless cities, villages, forests and roads, casting them all in a neon-rose twilight.

Cynder's tumble was stopped only by the massive girth that blew up between Leon's legs, the godly giant already 3,200 miles tall, and still shaking with raw, compounding, burning growth.

"I CAN'T KEEP HIS GROWTH DOWN LONG ENOUGH," Figment haggardly wheezed, loud enough for Cynder to pinpoint where he was, on her. ***"I J-JUST NEED...A MINUTE..."***

"I...IT'S YOURS, FIG!" she panted, giving him a nod so big he *heard* it.

Figment could only hold on against the sudden rush of air as the 500-mile Cynder climbed her way back up, caught Leon's massive neck in a bear hug and squeezed tight, trying to choke him out.

She struggled on, groaning, until a massive black arm sailed out to one side, then the other, just below her perch. Both Cynder and Figment looked back in time to see Toothless there, behind *and* around them, the 1,700-mile behemoth grabbing both of Leon's bigger wrists, still large enough to at least attempt to restrain him.

“I GOT HIM!” the super-giant boomed, putting absurd volumes of scaly muscle to work. ***“WHATEVER YOU PLAN TO DO...DO IT!”***

Leon might have objected, were his neck not being crushed by Cynder's growing arms. She may have only been about a fifth of his massive size, but she was strong enough to manage it. The harder she squeezed, the more power flowed into her, forcing her up to 800 miles, her clawed feet surging back down Leon's huge abs. The Charizard flexed, pushing back, and forcing every ounce of strength out of Toothless to keep him from fully retaliating. Considering the pokemon was moon-sized, that was saying quite a lot.

Again, Leon's massive body shook and rumbled, beginning to rise higher...yet, rather than growing any larger, another mass swelled up through the waters, shoving the huge Charizard into the upper atmospheres as a massive set of purple arms curled around his body and hugged in tight.

To Figment, the skies were simply changing colors, over and over; to Toothless, it was a set of muscle bound arms, sorely missed, as Spyro's titanic head rose up above Leon's.

“GET...OFF, ALREADY!”

Up Leon went—all of him. A 3,000-mile tall Spyro exploded bigger across the seas, filling the waters of the entire hemisphere, as a slightly-larger Leon struggled against his belly and chest. The five reptiles all struggled in unison, a mess of straining muscles and surging scales, the party no longer covering the ocean nor land...but the topside of the *entire planet*.

“WELCOME BACK, HEH!” Toothless laughed, despite his grunts and general straining. Spyro saw, mid-struggle, and beamed toothily.

“H-HEY! TOOTHLESS! LOOKING GOOD!”

Toothless smiled back, still pervious to compliments.

“HEHE! WELL—”

“FOCUS!” Cynder bellowed, as Leon whipped his thick neck about. ***“FEELING READY, YET, FIG? CAN YOU TRY A-AGAIN?”***

“A-ALMOST!” Figment shouted, jumping from Cynder back onto Leon, to continue absorbing with his comrades. He focused his imagination solely on containing Leon, just as the dragon's orange body began to tremble even deeper. ***“ACK! H-HERE HE GROWS, AGAIN! I’M ON IT!”***

Just as Cynder, Figment and Spyro fed and grew, he booming up to 3,500 miles, her to 1,100, and Figment to 900, and just as Leon's body finally began to stubbornly deflate a little bit, he violently heaved up again, bigger, spilling out across the curve of the globe as he burst to 7,200 miles!

His heels bumped entire continents as they bashed along, then bounced high, leaving the pull of the world's gravity. His wings flared out, wapping against Spyro's shoulders as the purple dragon hugged tighter, his arms grudgingly spreading out against scaly abs and bulging lats. Even his neck inflated bigger, and bigger, dimpling angrily out against Cynder's grip. No matter how much they took, Leon's growth only slowed every few seconds, only to tremble-boom even larger, until the planet itself was merely half his size, lost momentarily underneath a trembling rear and whipping tail.

At 14,400 miles in size, over 76 million feet tall, Leon's massive form left the world's increasingly meager pull, its gravity a suggestion—then, finally, a joke.

“Oh, not again,” Figment moaned, as once more their sizes climbed into the ridiculous, returning them again to battle it out in the cold depths of space. Cynder wrapped both colossal legs around Leon's neck to join her arms, as the Charizard slowly opened his mouth to fire again. Her huge arms were able to get around just enough of his muzzle to force it shut, and she held on for dear life as Leon's muffled roars swelled to a fury.

Given the relocation, Figment took his focus somewhat off of Leon:

“WE CAN BREATHE, WE CAN LIVE OUT HERE, J-JUST FINE! WE’RE FINE!”

To remove Leon from that equation would have meant death, so far as Figment knew, so on the included Charizard god lived, to rumble and tremble on, as a monstrous wave of growth welled up within him. Leon inhaled heavily in his blind anger, his maw glowing with mounting flames.

“LET...L-LET HIM DO IT, CYNDER,” Toothless growled, his huge muscles straining painfully as Leon's larger arms and wrists began to pull free. ***“LET HIM...DO IT! QUICK!”***

Without bothering to ask, Cynder released, and the enraged Leon unloaded an utterly immense apocalypse of fire directly forward. The blast hammered into Toothless, on and on, Leon being in no state to understand that, instead of obliterating his opponent, he was obliging.

Toothless quivered, his teeth protruding back out from his gums, his fins whipping out in a delirium of pleasure as the blast poured into his body. Only his head and thick neck remained free of the burst, before he blew up, then blew up again; his pectorals stretched from sheer mass as they emerged, rising higher, his thighs and abs surging out in tandem. Cynder, Figment and Spyro could only watch in muted awe as Toothless laughed, rumbled, and *tripled* in size, billowing to 6,000 miles on the spot.

Leon blasted on with all the force and duration he could manage, and every passing second, he unwittingly blew Toothless larger. His black polished muscles, already oversized beyond measure, erupted prodigiously. His shoulders roared as they ballooned to quadruple their width, his neck pushing his head higher and higher as it inflated with maddening size. His tail looped in delight as he snapped forward, and greedily glommed his muzzle over Leon's in a hungry kiss, expediting things.

Toothless might have exploded into energy, had it not been for Figment's fervent chanting, so far down below, on Cynder's vast scales:

“We're all alright! Q-uite alright, yes! I imagine...we're all quite fine! Nothing will befall us, n-ary a thing! We're practically indestructible!”

In turn, Toothless' protected body drank and drank as the blast billowed his gorging muscles out further, still, his head growing lost in them. His scales screeched as they tried to contain the sudden burst, the dragon humming with approval as he swelled up past 20,000 miles, then 25,000...30,000...

Spyro gawked openly, unabashedly envious, as Toothless's eyes rolled far back, his trembling body booming only larger, stronger, his biceps straining and peaking with power, without the benefit or trouble of flexing them. 35,000 miles...43,000 miles!

When the beam cut off, Leon's muzzle snapped left-to-right, the surprised behemoth trying to divorce his mouth from Toothless's; given that he was now triple Leon's massive size, that proved difficult. The god-like dragon's fins pushed back as he quested for any more size, any more power at all, not caring that each fin spanned the length of a large continent. Hands big enough to hold the planet like a ball squeezed needfully on Leon's huge biceps, pectorals bigger than moons twitching and flexing heavily against his own.

“MOOORE,” Toothless rumbled, his voice sending the others into a violent quake (Leon included). **“A...AGAAAAAAAIN!”** He nuzzled into Leon's smaller muzzle, insistent, even demanding. Only Cynder thought to cut through the stunning spectacle:

“NOW, WHILE HE'S INCAPACITATED! TAKE IT ALL!”

Spyro's 5,000-mile body swelled faster and faster, pushing past 5,400...5,700...6,000, his huge arms bulking out even larger than Leon's, despite the remaining size difference. Both mammoth arms moved as he clutched Leon's pectorals tightly, forcing the massive Charizard into his body so that he could kick both huge legs out and place his feet on Leon's thighs, adding more contact, making him burst up to 7,000 miles, instantly.

Cynder and Figment began to catch up to him as more and more of their 3,000-mile bodies pressed into Leon, while Toothless's selfish pushing served to drive her scales tighter to the Charizard's. She boomed bigger, surging powerfully out between the two males as once again, Leon began to gradually, sluggishly shrink down a small bit.

Figment, emboldened, began to shift his focus as Leon dwindled lower, deflating back down to 13,000 miles...12,000...as Cynder ballooned up to 8,000 miles, Figment to 7,000, and Spyro to 10,000, caging Leon and Cynder in against Toothless's immensity.

“THIS FEELS...FAMILIAR, HUH?” Spyro laughed, quaking with unbridled enjoyment, as his muscles burst even bigger, all over, overloading his body.

“DON'T LET UP!” Cynder rumbled, blowing up to 12,000 miles, as Spyro billowed up past 12,000, the both of them evening out muzzle-to-muzzle as Leon pointlessly beat his fists against her thickening sides. **“FIGMENT, H-HOW'S IT GOING?”**

Figment found himself struggling yet again, despite being 9,000 miles tall and flooded with power, and part of his thoughts raced to understand exactly why. He had grown so powerful that his imagination had fixed half a planet! He had opened numerous portals, simultaneously, so...why? Why couldn't he make his own portals, here? Why only red ones? Why only inside of...wait!

“I've got it!” he yelled, as one piece mentally snapped into place, then another.

This entire dimension, its energies...they were all different! He had opened a portal, against the stream, and was no longer in the one he had grown accustomed to! This Dynamax energy, it was completely foreign—the only way he could manipulate the aspects of this reality, was to adjust!

*But, there simply is no **chance** to! No time!*

*Then, what **CAN** you affect more easily, here?*

As he thought, something small but brilliantly bright rocketed up past, through space; as it happened, that's exactly what it was.

“The rocket!” he gasped, as it sailed past their phenomenally vast bodies, a tiny flicker pushing beyond them, up into the cosmos. “It's about to...egad, the portal!”

Leon's renewed rumbling interrupted as the Charizard-god stopped shrinking. At 5,000 miles, pinned between Cynder, Spyro and Toothless, he began to rumble worse and worse as the rage and frustration spiked inside. Where bolts of power had tickled or lashed about, a veritable *storm* of them blew out, before all four dragons found themselves shoved out once, twice, again...and again...

“NO, NO,” Cynder growled, pressing her moon-sized breasts tighter in. **“WE CAN'T LET HIS POWER KEEP SPIKING HIGHER!”**

The words, sadly, had far less effect than the effort.

Leon's huge muzzle pushed up between them all, followed by uncontrollably inflating pectorals. Cynder's breasts rubbed against the overflowing chest until it forced them up into her muzzle, even as she billowed to 16,000 miles, Spyro to 18,000, and Figment to 13,000. All three parted away as Toothless hugged into Cynder's back, keeping her in place with his bigger body.

The rumbling only worsened, impossibly, as Leon snarled and bellowed, the pink lightning casting out across space, battering into surrounding planets, as he detonated to four times his size, in

one bulging rush of power, blowing clear past 20,000 miles. A hard flex of his overloaded muscles forced Cynder, Figment and Spyro pinging off into the void, which in turn pushed Toothless off. Their return trip was cut short as Leon shook even deeper, flexing his bulk so tight that it striated into furrowing bands of sinew, his growth escalating at a fever pitch!

20,000 miles exploded out five times larger, this time, blowing everyone back again as his 100,000 mile girth slammed into them. Over half a billion feet of orange scales and rippling muscle erupted everywhere, scattering the dragons, until Figment found himself hardly a tenth of the Charizard's scope. He spun out, caught sight of the Pokemon World, and reached out for it. Being only about twice its size, at best, Figment still made for a fairly impressive sight as he vanished, then reappeared in the haze of their atmosphere, before his vast, massive purple muzzle rose back up over it all once more, trying to smile reassuringly to the tiny populace.

“PERFECT,” he rumbled, thinking quickly. **“I CAN USE THIS!”**

As he spoke, his vast hands holding the globe by its oceans, a fantastic light exploded above them all. Figment looked back in wonder as, high up above Leon's huge head, the rocket detonated its payload, scattering enough Infinity Energy to indeed punch a hole in space, itself. Within the void and stars the disc opened up, slowly but surely, stretching wider and wider, overhead.

The other dimension! This was it!

There was no time left to waste. Leon trembled bigger and bellowed, his immense hands swiping through space at Cynder, who flew back and away. Spyro and Toothless each lunged into the fray, Spyro grabbing one massive wrist with both arms, Toothless clutching the other. The trio grappled on as Leon closed his glowing eyes and shuddered, mid-struggle, the rumbling growing even worse.

There was no way he could open his own portal in this dimension, Figment knew that already. They would have to force Leon up through the portal, in theory...but with how big he was growing, with no end in sight, they might not have a chance to get him into the portal, which was only spread out to...what? 1,000 miles in diameter? It was growing wider, faster, yes...but not *that* fast...

Leon's muscles boomed up tightly against themselves, having nowhere left to grow anymore, before the over-bulked Charizard bellowed bloody murder, trembled, and exploded **BIGGER**, blowing up seven times his size; his scales stretched out into great oceans of orange as his body bulged through them, casting the 40,000-mile Spyro, the 43,000-mile Toothless, and the 37,000-mile Cynder completely apart, severing the group yet again.

Cynder bashed into a moderate-sized planet, her thick back muscles crushing in as it went off its axis. Spyro spun out, knocking twin moons away like billiards while Toothless braced himself, flared out immense wings, and slowed his momentum.

Yet, when all three looked, Leon was nowhere to be found—in that he was now everywhere. 700,000 miles of throbbing muscle and crackling pink lightning overfilled even their sights, a great valley of abs looming past entire planets. A set of heaving pectorals rose and rose, straining and bulging up beyond them, cosmic thigh muscles booming off in the other direction, toes no longer visible. Well over three billion feet tall, he constituted enough geography to where the very rocket they had sent out would have needed hours to travel across Leon's body, at top speed.

Fingers big enough to grip the larger planets curled in as Leon's grunts of frustration shook space; his now-terrifying body began to tremor and shake even harder, the planets, asteroid belts and moons all buzzing fearfully about as more power built within the god's muscles.

Still, Spyro and Cynder persisted, reattaching to Leon's vast muscles and feeding themselves larger. Spyro growled as his body exploded up to 90,000 miles, then 200,000, stretching too-tight as his bulk swelled disproportionately bigger. Even still, he was only child-sized to Leon, whose body didn't even slow down as the other two seemed to fill up on the mere runoff, the overflow. Cynder cried out as she felt herself burst up to 140,000 miles, bigger than ever, then 180,000, yet Leon's shaking only grew worse and worse...

Figment fixed his huge gaze back on the planet in his paws, determined to find what he needed, upon it. The only way they could open their own portal was—

The rumble overhead swelled to startling degrees, and this time, it froze Figment's blood.

Leon did not octuple his size, this burst. Hardly that little came to him.

Figment looked up, to see Leon's body swell into obscurity, in one enormous, mind-stretching Ragnarok of unbridled, heedless, ascending growth.

Leon erupted like a volcano, booming bigger in all possible directions. His left pectoral was suddenly 200,000 miles across, then 400,000, as Leon's shaft plowed through space, longer and wider, his rear pushing whole planets back like marbles. His vast wings spread wider and wider across the solar system as his neck grew thicker than his entire torso, pulsing with too much power. His feet blew out, rocketing down across space as energy blasted off of his swelling muscles in waves, his muzzle rising past the meager portal as his body exploded with an atomic fury beyond 4,000,000 miles...20,000,000 miles...200,000,000 miles...

Figment just stared. Even his brilliant mind snapped at the sight of it, or what sight of it even he could manage. He was nearly 14,000 miles tall, a true leviathan...and here he was, easily well over a thousand times smaller than Leon...no, 1,500 times...

Still, Leon grew. His body bloated with unending waves of crashing muscles, the beast over 500,000,000 miles in size, now. The cap was off, and whatever pace his Dynamax growth had been holding at was completely eradicated. There was no stop, now, no inhibition, no safety, no control.

Far to the left of, well...space, Figment dumbly watched. Spyro was still clinging to one vast kneecap, his dear friend roaring as his body taxed itself up to 500,000 miles, Cynder clutching a fattening monster of a tail, blowing up to 400,000, herself.

And Figment couldn't stop it. Even his wildest imagination couldn't even slow it down. He tried. And tried. And tried. And tried. And tried.

And Leon...his shaking only grew *worse*.

Everything—Figment, the planets, all matter began to obediently drift forth, zombie-like, crawling toward Leon, the new god, the monstrosity, his gravity well swelling out of control as he

bellowed and panted and shook and raged and *grew*.

Only one thing managed to stay put, throughout: the portal. Figment turned his attention over to it, a hole in space, showing space...only that space floated freely over Leon's growing abs, entirely independent.

That very same tear began to stretch wider as something, some singular thing, began to push through. Figment gawked as his mind raced, trying to understand what was happening as a massive dark thing continually pushed out, and out, and out, on and on. The rim of the portal didn't quite grow, so much as it was *forced* wider by the pure size of what was entering.

Suddenly, the portal that was formerly 5,000 miles across was over 100,000, and still widening, as more and more and more mass kept pushing out, forcing it to 200,000 miles wide, then 400,000. It was only from momentary comparison to Leon that Figment dared to calculate a guess, and as that one odd second ticked off into two, the mass kept growing wider, wider, until the portal was well over a million miles across; yet *still* it widened.

The portal nearly ripped, struggling to hold, as a neighboring mass pushed through, joining the first. Another joined, then another, all four lengths relentlessly pushing forth.

Only Figment comprehended this moment, as the other three dragons fought and clashed against Leon's massive, 700,000,000-mile bulk. Only Figment tried to process the development, before a supposition approached. The instant it did, he sent it away. But it returned, worse than before.

No. There was no way. There was no way!

As Leon shook worse, his cosmic body about to explode even bigger, a fifth mass broke through the portal, which kept expanding, until it was every bit...no, until it was even wider than Leon was, tall.

Figment floated back, holding the poor planet with him, for whatever safety he could manage, as the finality of what he perceived rang terribly, mind-breakingly true.

It was a hand.

A scaly, black hand.

A hand so utterly mammoth in scope that it easily closed around Leon's midsection, big enough to grab the billion-mile tall Charizard like a pathetic little toy.

Leon, in his state, could only thrash uselessly as Figment watched the hand retreat, pulling Leon with it. The vast portal stretched out its last, affording enough space (well, within space) to permit the colossus to pass into it, before it started to gradually shrink back down. Spyro, over 600,000 miles tall, tumbled back through space, in a shock. Cynder, 500,000 miles, struggled for bearing, as Toothless bounced down off of a large planet.

It was closing. The portal was closing! The only way out of this world! No one was big enough to reach it and keep it open, in time! Not at the rate he was seeing it dwindle!

Panicking, Figment clutched the planet, hoisting it back up to his muzzle as he focused desperately on it.

Where was it...where!?

...THERE!

Figment poured everything he had into one single thing. Something massive blew up atop the world, drifting off in seconds, outsizeing the entire world quickly—the pokeball from before!

This had to work. It WOULD WORK!

Figment let the Pokemon World drift out as he clutched the planet-sized pokeball tightly. He turned with both hands, pressed the button, and threw it, forcing it to sail out through space as it ballooned even bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger. It outsizeed the next biggest planets, then the largest, on and on, Figment willing it ever-bigger, until its 90,000-mile mass snapped open, and with a flash of light—

Fur. Fur, and scales. *Everywhere.*

Having hurled the massive pokeball directly at the center of the portal, where he could tell it would have to eventually close, Figment managed to let someone out, someone that was already presumably gigantic, *before* his imagination upsized it many, many *thousands* of times larger.

“HO, WHAT THE HECK!?”

A dragon muzzle loomed over everyone, a vast, wide strip of pink at its center. A set of boundless pink eyes blinked, each so colossal and immense that the blinking could be felt, once the eyelids connected. A set of horns rose on and on, above, as a gang of tiny planets began to drift towards one single looming, furry ear.

Bartok was *big*. Scary-big. Even to the four scary-big dragons floating in the void.

The portal's edges shrank faster and faster, before catching on the million-mile wide sides of the bat-dragon, his full body Figment presumed to be roughly 16,000,000 miles tall. Even Spyro and Cynder were less than bite-sized to him as his adorable muzzle filled space. The portal snuggled in against his bulky sides, trying to shrink in against him, until even his enormous self felt it.

“*Bartok!*” Figment roared, swimming his way through space to get close enough to be seen. As Figment was less than a flea to him, it was a challenge. Thankfully, just one moment's worth of absorption blew Figment up so large that he finally was somewhat visible, at a whopping, puny 300,000 miles. “*Bartok, it's Figment!*”

“HEY, FIGMENT! BOUT

***TIME YOU LET..GOSH, ISSIT
DARK OUT HERE...WAIT...”***

Bartok's immeasurable eyes widened even larger. He tugged, found himself stuck, and looked back to see half of himself vanished, no longer extant in space. He wriggled in confusion, making the kind of face that said he felt his other half, but could no longer locate it by sight.

“FIG!” Spyro huffed, floating over to him, putting a huge palm on his broad shoulders. *“FIG...WH-WHAT WAS ALL THAT, JUST NOW? TELL ME I DIDN'T...I MEAN, LEON WAS...”*

“TAKEN,” Figment finished, nodding grimly. *“BY A GREAT, HUGE HAND.”*

“B-BUT, LEON WAS ALREADY ABSOLUTELY HUMONGOUS, EVEN TO US!” Cynder added, drifting over to the two males. *“T-THERE'S NO WAY...”*

***“AH, C'MON, WHADD'RE YOU
GUYS ON ABOUT? WHY'RE YOU
SO SMALL, ANYHOW? WHERE'S
TH' REST-A-ME? I-OUCH!”***

Bartok winced, grunting in pain as he felt the portal shrink further, cutting in tight.

***“AWW, NOW WHAT'S ALL DIS
HERE, EVEN!?”***

“DID YOU...BLOCK THE PORTAL...WITH BARTOK?” Cynder asked as Toothless finally caught up, only large enough to climb onto Figment's huge neck and shoulder. He sagged against the dragon's neck, worn out, and Figment gave him a reassuring pat with a vast palm.

*“I HAD TO KEEP IT FROM CLOSING, SOMEHOW! LEON IS IN THERE, AND IT'S THE ONLY WAY OUT OF **HERE!** I WAS GOING TO SUPER-SIZE THAT POKEBALL AND CATCH LEON IN IT, SINCE THE PORTAL COULDN'T FIT HIM...BUT NOW, ALL WE CAN DO IS GO AND FOLLOW HIM THROUGH...OH, BARTOK! I'M SORRY, HERE...”*

Figment turned to the far larger dragon-bat and opened his hand. Somewhere, stuck between the

colossal scales, he felt for it, then imagined it big enough, and right away the final green-gold candy swelled to fill his one hand. It continued to grow and grow, until he held it like a boulder, and offered it up.

“HEY, WHOA, WAIT A MINUTE, FIG,” Spyro started, only to watch in shock as Bartok sniffed it, then grinned, and opened his huge maw wide, letting Figment toss it right in. *“YOU DIDN’T TELL ME YOU STILL HAD THE LAST ONE! AWW!”*

“I KNOW, SPYRO, BUT IT’S NECESSARY. WATCH!”

Bartok gulped, then huffed happily, a vast pink tongue sliding for miles and miles over his looming muzzle. He closed his huge eyes and smiled wider as his muscles began to throb, then shift. Between both dimensions, Bartok's body changed, the four dragons gasping as his vast furry shoulders bulged and straightened, his feral arms swelling into a man's arms, scales stretching over proud, humanoid digits. His pectorals swelled and pulled in at the core, a set of defined traps bulging along his neck, and his already-vast body boomed even larger, stronger, thicker...

“EVERYONE GET FAR BACK!” Figment ordered, as the moaning colossus trembled and blew up bigger, and bigger, yet.

“YEEEEEEEEEEEE—”

Amazingly, Bartok's altered arms started to grow so massive and powerful that he began to force the portal wider and wider, his ivory brawn frantically bulging in size, against it. Like a strongman versus some rubber tire or ring he began to flex, his biceps billowing to absurd proportions, his winglike hands clasping its boundaries as he ballooned to 19,000,000 miles, then 23,000,000, boom-laughing and quaking with overflowing muscles.

It proved laughably easy for Bartok to stretch it further out as he pushed, his vast white scales and bristling fur singing as he bloomed bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and BIGGER; 30,000,000 miles of pulsing brawn ballooned heavily, his draconic muzzle pushing higher and higher over his inflated chest, his smile wide and giddy. He soared larger, thicker, on and on and on, pushing past 45,000,000 miles, his heaving sides pumping so wide that they nearly filled that side of the portal.

“OKAY, AS FOR US,” Figment said, rubbing his hands together, as he turned to a sulking Spyro and Cynder. *“WE NEED TO GET INSIDE, NOW!”*

He gestured to the pokeball, still open, floating at colossal size, nearby. Even Cynder balked, openly, ahead of Spyro or Toothless.

“WHAT?”

“WHY WOULD WE EVER GET BACK IN ONE OF THOSE, FIG?” Spyro asked, as Bartok happily groaned behind them, swelling to 55,000,000 miles, filling their view more and more and more. *“I MEAN, THE PORTAL IS RIGHT THERE, ISN'T IT? AND, IF WE DO, WHAT ABOUT BARTOK? HE'S HOLDING THE THING OPEN FOR US...”*

Figment grinned, nodding.

“INDEED. HE’S THE ONLY ONE THAT SHOULD GET TAXED, FOR TRAVELING. WE’RE ALL KEEPING EVERY SCRAP OF SIZE WE HAVE, THIS TIME! YOU SAW THE SIZE OF THAT HAND, WHATEVER IT BELONGED TO. WE CAN’T GO IN SMALLER, WE HAVE NO CANDY LEFT, THIS TIME. WHATEVER WE DO, NOW, IT’S ALL ON OUR REMAINING POWERS.”

“Wait, we’re out, that’s right,” Toothless sighed, comparatively small on Figment’s thick shoulder bulk. “I’m the smallest, then! Gah!”

“WE’LL FIRE YOU UP BIGGER, TOOTHLESS, BUDDY,” Spyro soothed, nodding. *“WE WOULDN’T LEAVE YOU SMALL, C’MON.”*

Toothless sighed, not even trying to hide his relief.

“I was figuring out how to ask, heh,” he laughed, wagging briskly.

Bartok was nearing 100,000,000 miles in size, the combination of his enlarged ball, the potion in his system, and the planet-sized candy he ate all making him unthinkably powerful as his bulk blasted out even mightier, and mightier, his arms as thick as his entire torso, his neck nearly as wide as his hulking, unseen thighs. He grunted in contentment, booming up to 130,000,000, then 150,000,000, after, the portal having no chance to fully take his size, as he outpaced its taxing with his growth. For all his staggering scope, the portal was still considerably smaller than the great hand had made it, minutes earlier. It would just have to do.

At 220,000,000 miles in size, over one trillion feet tall, plus change, Bartok would have impressed the very gods themselves. His lovely pink muzzle tip twitched as he smiled and blushed, his towering ears flicking as he looked down past his pectorals, to see his diminutive compatriots work together to close the huge pokeball, then offer it up to him.

“Throw this at us, Bartok!” Figment instructed, as Bartok continued to aggressively expand. “Once we’re in, you carry us with you, into the portal!”

Bartok tried to answer, but his voice shook them all into a wobble of thundering bass. The 310,000,000-mile god of a bat-dragon blushed, embarrassed, and nodded his assent. A monstrous hand reached down, fingers carefully taking it up between the tips. He gently, *gently* lobbed it at them, and Spyro, Figment, Cynder and Toothless all lit up into a small flicker of light, before fading into the opened ball. It closed, and as Bartok’s growth surged up past 350,000,000 miles, he kept it in the small of his enormous palm, closed his hand around it and held his friends close, as his pectoral fur and scales swelled on and on against it, warm and thick and tight.

“Alright, den, off we go!” he chuckled, shrugging his titanic shoulders as he stretched the portal out with his elbows, then slipped inside, letting the boundaries shrink down, down, finally closing off as it all vanished and took them with it.

Back on the Pokemon World, shaken and scarred, but intact, all hell continued to break loose. Satellite feeds of dragon-gods clashing in the heavens filled every functioning monitor as every backup

generator in every city hummed to life, supporting the leftover structures and villages and islands left untouched in the fracas...until, one by one, they all began to reform, to return to shape, on their own...

Lucario sighed as she sat in the ocean off Hoenn, stroking a vast paw over Dragonite, petting the smaller balloon-dragon softly. The converted dragon-pokemon loomed impossibly large, to the rest of the world, a great and imposing 5-mile behemoth of fur and scales. Her dreds hung down to her huge shoulders as her ears perked high, and she slowly turned Dragonite to face her. Dragonite clutched the S.S. Tidal to herself protectively, doting on it and the Stone family and Drake, all of whom wisely remained on board. Every few moments, Lucario trembled, then billowed larger, and larger, again.

I...I'M SORRY I LEFT, Lucario finally admitted, lifting even Dragonite up out of the ocean, to hug her close. *I KNOW YOU WERE LEFT THERE, TO WATCH OVER LEON...AND...I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING, OUT THERE, BUT WE HAVE TO TRUST THOSE DRAGONS TO HELP...*

Dragonite resisted, still, her gaze fixed down at the tiny ship and her beloved humans, within. Well, mostly Drake.

“Well, until she puts us back down, we're dragon-bound, Stone,” Drake muttered, turning from the Bridge windows to face the Devon President, who sat with his head in his hands, silent. “Maybe first and foremost, you ought to see to your boy?”

“How can I face him,” Stone Sr. groaned, not asking. “When I was so wrong...”

“You had your reasons, wrong or not. We aren't dead, are we?”

Steven stood out on the rails, patting thankfully at Dragonite's looming muzzle.

President Stone slowly shook his head, having time now, and yet, needing much more.

Back at the ruins of Devon Corp, Anders checked every monitor he could find, anything for any sign of his Leon, out there in space. He knew—he knew full-well that Leon had grown beyond the planet. His rump covered it all, and then some. They should have all been ground to dust.

So how? *How were they all okay?*

And where was Leon? Where had any of them gone?

“Leon...”

ELSEWHERE

Enormous stone walls shook as something unbelievably big entered the castle's grand hallway, thudding along a patchwork of countless cobblestones, each one bigger than a planet. Stars glimmered and sparkled as they saturated the violet drapes lining the walls and Gothic arches. Monstrous pillars lined either side of a velvet carpet that could stretch from one solar system to the next. Chandeliers so large that Suns and moons were embedded in its loops hovered overhead as an incredibly immense creature bulged past; it was so overgrown and thick that it still had to squeeze past every column as it

thoomed over to and *thudded* down upon a massive black throne. Its massive rear and thighs had already outgrown it, leading to a pleased huff of confirmation as a black dragon of unspeakable size forced itself down on it anyway, enjoying the way it warped and cracked as she broke its spirit.

Leon struggled, even as he ballooned bigger, and bigger, heaving in messy bursts of growth, surging and swelling in her vast, clawed hand. As he did, that very hand constricted, and the five-billion mile Charizard helplessly felt his size soak out into her claws, making the dragoness expand vastly larger.

Her hiss was of unhinged delight as she billowed up, heedless and uncaring, her long neck and head slamming up against the ceiling and knocking the chandelier loose. Her horns swelled back against the stonework above, her breasts bulging lower and heavier; her feet grew and grew and grew, smothering the cobblestone patchwork below as she greedily filled everything. Her shoulders bulged and bullied into the pillars, cracking them as Leon fed her, her green eyes flashing brighter, the larger she grew.

“YEEEEESSSSSSSSSS,” Maleficent snarled, shaking with pleasure and power, as her 70,000,000,000-mile body kept exploding bigger, her dark muscles surging, the purple swells of her plated cleavage booming and stretching hotly. **“YOU...WILL S-SUFFICE...FOR NOW...BUT, YOU WILL ALSO HELP...BRING HIM BACK...T-TO MEEEE...”**

Leon growled and strained, only for her growing hand to crush in on him, taking even more of his overflowing growth into herself, until her sides ballooned through smashed pillars, colliding against cracking walls, the ceiling snapping away against the rising tide of her stretching, shaking body.

It hardly mattered. She knew how to reform it, now, resize it. She had learned *so much*.

And when Figment finally arrived, she would be happy to show him her appreciation for sending her here, so...*so* long ago...back when it was just a wasteland, a miserable void.

Through the castle windows a strange darkness howled and writhed, swelling in and out against the stained glass, bulging and writhing, alive and lifeless, stagnant, yet moving, and ever-growing. Maleficent snorted dismissively, looking to the demonic swirl outside as she inflated too big, the interior filling with her body, overflowing with dark, surging, scaly mass...

“Oh, but you can't have him,” she cooed, throbbing bigger, and bigger, as she seemed to address the fiendish mass, beyond. **“I'm his only friend, after all—and I have such, SUCH plans...”**

BETWEEN

A pokeball big enough to swallow its home planet sailed through the space between worlds, nestled safely in the immensity of Bartok's endlessly huge palm. Even with the taxation of inter-dimensional travel, the godly bat-dragon remained enormous; it wasn't that the size tax had failed, quite the opposite—it was more that there was simply *that much* of him to tax.

His 350,000,000-mile tall body shrank subtly, sighing slowly down to 330,000,000, then 310,00,000...only for his muscled figure to quake and defiantly surge back up to 360,000,000 miles, then 410,000,000...440,000,000...490,000,000!

Bartok's eyes lidded in delight as he hugged himself, feeling every bit of his body explode even bigger, and bigger...truth be told, it was just a nice when he felt it fade a moment and let the taxation shrink him back down to 420,000,000...only for the trembling to return, even more. Every time it dared to shrink him, his body dared to outgrow what had been taken.

T-this hero stuff...kinda does have its rewards, heh, he thought, aglow with pleasure, biting his lip as he slipped back to 400,000,000 miles...then detonated bigger, as if his body were clarifying just who was in charge: 390,000,000 miles of bulk halted, shook hotly, then blew up again to 450,000,000...530,000,000...670,000,000...

In comparison the 90,000-mile planet of a pokeball remained as it was, sinking deeper and deeper into the boundless warmth of Bartok's scaly palm. Within that ball, no one was the wiser that their once-puny comrade was embarrassing the very fabric of multidimensional space.

“Better,” Toothless sighed as he finished absorbing off of Spyro, shaving a staggering 200,000 miles off of a partially-willing Spyro, then another 100,000 off of Cynder, blowing him up to just a head taller than Figment. “That's so much better!”

He beamed a broad, goofy grin, flexing overfull black pectorals, letting the smooth scales shimmer in the overhead light. He took a seat along the cushioned rim about the walls and kept space from Figment, Spyro and Cynder, lest the absorption factor between them grow problematic.

“Yeah, I guess,” Spyro muttered, smiling anyhow. “I suppose I'm still okay like this, a little sharing hardly hurts.” He may have been 400,000 miles tall, but shrunken down within the subspace of the pokeball all four of them were nearly equals, sitting across from one another.

Well. Equals, in height, and bulk, rather. With the battle with Leon over and done, they could finally take proper stock of themselves—and goodness, they were looking alright.

“It is something, isn't it?” Figment chuckled, nodding. “SO much brawn between us...yet, I feel like we're having the kind of sophisticated group conversations that, ah...”

Though he remained smiling, the oddest little look held in Figment's eyes, the ridges tilting up as he froze a moment, then laughed it off.

“Blar—” Cynder offered.

“Blarion, of course!” the purple dragon guffawed, shaking his head. “Gracious, I *am* more tired than I thought, aren't I? How embarrassing! How could I have possibly...ah, well, he and other members of the academy, they often would gather and talk through scientific suppositions, theories of matter and space...oh, one time, Blarion even...ah.”

Again, Figment stopped. His smile shrank.

“Why, that's the...the funniest thing.”

Toothless seemed lost on the joke, but Spyro and Cynder watched on, brows furrowing the tiniest bit in worry as Figment visibly struggled.

“You're tired, Fig, like you said,” Spyro chipped in, cocking his head casually. “I'd be wiped, if I had to juggle a *fraction* of what you've handled.”

“That's what it is,” Cynder concluded, with a verbal stamp of authority. “You should rest up, dear, we'll stay quiet. You do so much, already.”

“Heh. Truth be told, I thought you wouldn't last a day, when we first met,” Spyro chuckled. There was nothing nasty in his tone; he was legitimately amused.

“Well, thanks,” Figment shot back, starting up a nervous laugh.

“No, really, you're the toughest dragon I've ever met. You're crazy-smart, you're kind, and—”

“I started this entire mess, Spyro,” he countered, blushing gently. “I...”

“You *help*, Fig,” Cynder said, cutting through. “That's what you do.”

Figment's face had never been this hot, ever. He didn't even know what to do about it, aside from looking down at the floor in a flustered huff. Of course, all that did was wedge his chin into his pectoral cleft—but, down it stayed.

“You're welcome,” Spyro added, closing his eyes, and leaning back against his own muscle.

“T-thank you, both. You too, Toothless. And Bartok, out there. Even Mushu and that reluctant dragon, and...and Lucario. I couldn't have asked for better companions, I mean it. Whatever happens out there, when that ball opens up again...I just wanted to say that much. I don't know where I would be, without you lot.”

“Yeah,” Toothless snorted, scratching his belly idly. “I'm still tougher, but otherwise, yeah!”

Figment beamed, still hot-faced, but happy. His eyes shut and stayed shut, but his mouth was unable to match:

“What will you do, when you go back home, Spyro? Cynder?”

Both dragons blinked, caught off guard. Then, they looked to each other.

“Well, I don't really know,” Cynder began, pedaling away from the topic. “I mean...to be honest, ah, there isn't much left to...go back to...”

“You sound so wishy-washy,” Toothless interjected, wagging in his seat. “You're the surest one here. It's strange, hearing you *not* be that way.”

Now Cynder was blushing about as hard as Figment, who kept his eyes closed.

“Well...there's a lot that happened, in my world, and...I...”

“She has a home to go to, *any* time she likes,” Spyro said, folding his monstrously huge violet arms over a hulking yellow-plated chest. “I mean, if she ever wants to go there. Whenever. With me.”

Toothless broke in a fit of throaty rumbles, resembling a chortle.

“Hah! It's just as well, she likes you, anyhow.”

“Toothless!” Cynder snapped, before reeling it in.

“Don't get mad,” the black dragon soothed, somewhat. “He's lucky.”

Spyro nodded, just once, and Toothless returned it. It was the nod only comrades could do.

“What about you, then? Where'll you go, home?” Spyro asked Toothless. His green eyes widened and he tilted his head some, weighing the notion for what seemed to be the first time.

“Me? Oh, I'll go wherever.”

“That's it?” Cynder asked.

“Sure. Wherever I end up.”

“Nothing wrong with that,” Figment added, shifting his gigantic bulk against the wall, already half-asleep. “You'll...do fine, wherever you end up, Toothless, I know it.”

“See, he gets it. I wouldn't even mind traveling around with you, Fig...”

Figment was drifting too far off to respond as sleep finally gathered him up in gentle, forgiving darkness. All thought ceased, and a small, unhappy idea slipped through its cage, lunging right for him, vanishing with his mind into dawning silence. Not one of them had dared to mention that enormous dark hand, out in space. Figment already knew who it was, deep down...even if the rest of him fought to keep it locked.

That same dark hand returned in his slumber, and it grasped.

14.

When the light came back, it was through a slit. That slit remained still. There was no opening of partitions, no swirl of space, no new world to take in. As Figment's eyes adjusted it proved to be nothing more than a window, light threading calmly through closed drapes.

The dragon lay there, half-asleep, letting his lids close, then sluggishly reopening to the sight of the library's back corner. The old Victrola player sat comfortably on a marble-top table on the other side of a blood-red velvet chaise, several books on Africa and Indonesia stacked to keep it occupied.

The hum of the quiet crept in as he yawned wide, then sighed; Figment slipped up into a seat, his horned head swimming, stuffed with cotton, another yawn getting loose.

He thumped down off his favorite chair, shook his head clear and shuffled along, little claws tapping across stained hardwood as he ambled into the kitchen and fumbled through a cupboard for anything that could hold hot tea. That always helped.

Stillness thrived as the dragon set a kettle over a steel burner. The knob clicked, but no flame, so he shrugged, smiled weakly, and blew a streak out himself, lighting the pilot under the coil and watching it start to glow hot.

He sniffed, turning back, looking through unfocused eyes about the place. Was it just him?

“Hello,” he called, less a question than a statement, cast out for reactions.

There the tea was on the table, nice and hot. There Figment sat on a stack of books, in order to reach the tabletop from the chair. It all seemed right.

The front door shut softly, pulling him from his cup as a few shuffling footsteps made their way into the kitchen. There he was.

“Hot one, today,” the man spoke, hurriedly crossing the kitchen floor, his cloak folded about one angled arm. He tugged a glove off, then another, stopping only to brush the underside of his reddish beard with a knuckle. “Bit better in here, I’d say, eh?”

Figment watched the whole way along, his little mouth open.

“Big day, Figment, *big day*,” he continued, tromping intently into the study neighboring the library. “Proposals abound, on the light tuner, model seven, and the fly-wright demonstration model. I just...yes, here it is, then. Right!”

The phantom returned, proffering a quick grin before turning and entering the library, likely going all the way back to the lab. Figment's breathing quickened, his scaly brows arching up, his jaw refusing to work.

“Figment! Figment, have you seen the, ah...schematics for the series one fly-wright? That's the one, not zero, my lad!”

The teacup shook in his tiny purple hands as he finally managed a dry gulp, just as the man reappeared, rolled papers and prints gathered under an arm.

“Figment? You awake?”

“I, ah,” Figment wheezed, dropping the tea entirely, the cup thumping and rolling dumbly on the floor. “Ah.”

“Right, there's a good fellow. Have a cup ready for me, as well, will you?”

Figment was on him, and nothing else existed. He buried his little muzzle right into his chest, ruffling his sharp button-up shirt and red vest as he squeezed desperately into him.

“Well! Hello! What's all this, suddenly?”

“B...Blarion,” was all Figment could get out, a hard sniff following.

“Figment.”

“I was...I didn't have...this dream, t-this massive...e-epic dream!”

Blarion let Figment do whatever it was that was happening, cocking one restrained brow. Whatever it was, the man still put a hand on the dragon's back, patting comfortingly.

“You *are* pure imagination, my friend,” Blarion chuckled, pulling Figment back some. “I shouldn't be so surprised that your dreams are serious affairs! You'll really have to tell me all about it, every word, when I return! I want to know more, you know!”

“O-of course,” Figment coughed, shaking his head. “It really...was incredible...”

Blarion set Figment down respectfully on his chair, picked the teacup off the floor and set it back onto the table.

“Fascinating! You must write it all for me, unless you can remember it, outright.”

“Remember? Yes, of course! I...gracious, I remember it all...”

“Excellent! I shall return, then, shortly! Remember that tea, as well, if you please.”

The door shut, and the stillness returned.

“I...forgot you.”

No one answered.

The lab was just as it had been when he had...*dreamed* of his departure through the portal. Even the machine was there, where it had been throughout its inceptive stages, all the way to its near-completion. On closer inspection, he found it *was* actually completed. Just as it had been.

“Odd, that,” Figment hummed, double-checking the gears in the back cabinet.

It hadn't been completed, except for in his dream, at the beginning. He *knew* that.

The floor groaned then went silent again, and the slightest, softest note of dread crept into his back, up his wings, all the way through his neck, drawing a nasty shudder out.

Of course. A dream. Stupid, stupid.

Figment bonked himself on the head in penance for a bout of foolishness. He'd fallen asleep in the pokeball and was dreaming. It was obvious, now that it was here in front of him.

The realization was a relief, and a horrible one, at that.

His lip pursed high, the dragon nearing sudden tears.

He wasn't home. That wasn't Blarion. He'd fooled himself, again.

“Well,” Figment gasped, catching a weary sob, “good to see the old place, then, at least. I...suppose I ought to be grateful. Yes. Yes, it's a comfort. Entirely.”

The dread only swelled within him, not seeming to care what he told himself. This wasn't like the other dream, at all. His growth, clearly a self-imposed interpretation of his personal growth versus the place he had started out from, was still a positive thing. Encouraged. Yet here, he was small. So, so small. Had he always been that little, compared to Blarion? Surely not.

But being home again *was* the ultimate goal, yes? Why, then, did a dream of such leave icy mud in his veins? What was this?

“Hello?”

This time, he was asking. Pleading, in fact. It was night out through the silent window and as he looked on, something darker yet surged, slithering across its exterior.

“H-heavens!”

How long had he been inspecting the machine? Had time passed, so?

“A dream, right,” he reminded himself. “Only that. Best to...w-wake up, then, I s...suppose.”

Another creak from a darkened bedroom, the door an open mouth to black.

“I ah, i-imagine I—”

The room growled, and even blind, it had eyes. Eyes on Figment.

Lord, gracious, something was there.

“Ahah, a *b-bad* dream, no doubt, brought on by s-stressors of a beleaguered mind. That's it. Not a bother. One merely has to w-waken! Yes! Wake up, then. Here we go.”

Something heavy brushed against the bed he knew was there in the dark, big enough to shove it against the far wall. Figment leapt back, wings uselessly flapping in naked fear.

“Waking up!” he squeaked, panic strangling his precious few words in a clenched throat. “Wake up! Wakey, wakey, eggs and bac—”

Something straight from hell bellowed and the moment footsteps slammed toward him, Figment bolted. The kitchen was lit only by the pilot light now, the daylight dead and gone, far away. Not bothering to turn back, Figment scrambled to close the kitchen doorway just as something enormous bashed it, cracking it nearly apart at the center.

Wood chips sprayed loose as the tiny dragon staggered back. The door held, but the footsteps boomed back the other way into the bedroom; Figment barreled to the study door and slammed it shut as well, knowing the apartment was connected all across, meaning the bedroom led to the study, on its other side.

BAM!

The very same door cracked and splintered part-way, making Figment scream and tear down the darkened entryway, out through the apartment door, and into the dormitory hallway of the Academy's ninth floor. The door shut and Figment locked it, just before a catastrophe of impacts battered into it from within.

“Oh, wake up!” Figment cried. “Spyro, Cynder! Toothless! Bartok, anyone!”

He must have been thrashing all about, in real time; why weren't any of the others waking him up? What could they possibly have been doing—

CRACK!

“Gracious!”

The tiny dragon spun and broke into a gallop down the dark hallway, twisted in unknowable shapes and shadows, as the door began to smash apart, *thud* after snapping *thud*. His every footfall to the floor was so real, so *solid*. As Figment stumbled into the corner he smashed his horned head against an oak panel, and a very-believable stab of pain raced down his neck.

“Ah! What...”

He felt it. Absolutely, he did. And here he still remained as the door snapped apart, down the way he had come. He picked himself up and limped towards the stairwell, only to find there was none—another corner, in the wrong place.

“What in blazes!?”

Panting, he flung himself down the other hallway, finding a twin master staircase at the center—but, that was only on the third and second floors, leading down to the lobby! What was this? What was it doing, up here!?

It wasn't the Academy. Not the one he—

“Oh, no,” Figment moaned, as the hallway ached and rattled, something mad and ageless howling and churning nearer from the opposite hall. “No...no, it can't...”

Another Academy. *Another world.*

Figment's wounded mind reeled, working fast (yet having so little to work with) to the point that the short list of things he could figure looped on itself, instead of working forward.

How had he wound up in another world, in such a state? He had pieced together the rules that bound him to his quest, and this was *not* a part of them. Moreover, what was that *thing* doing here, with him? If this was real, then what in God's name was chasing him!?

You can't wake up

Something huge crashed into the hall corner he had just slid into, echoing. Figment took off to the new stairwell, scuttling gracelessly down it in the darkness. The towering double-bay windows on the stair's peak were awash in a storm of black shapes and coils, alive and wanting, casting madness between what slim light was allowed on the steps.

You can't get out

"Help," Figment croaked, as he fell into a tumble down the remaining steps and crashed into a clumsy heap in the pitch. The floor was cold, bordering on wet, and as Figment struggled to reclaim his bearings something slammed overhead, shaking the Academy to its withering foundations. "S-someone, help me, please! Please!"

You're so little

"Have to...get out, but where..."

And so lost

The voice was so big it was everywhere. What seemed to have started in his head was now shaking everything outside of it. All Figment could manage was borderline-animal grunts as he panted frantically, his little heart pounding against his chest, drowning everything else out as the ceiling violently bowed, sinking lower from some growing weight. Boards *snap-snapped* loudly as he ran to the right of the lobby foyer, before a tremendous ebony mass blew through the ceiling, swelling uncontrollably in size and scope as it groaned loudly, bursting and gushing to fill everything.

Figment slammed a door behind him, now in a large classroom. He skidded into a desk, which dominoed into the next as he slipped down underneath the professor's desk and shook in abject terror.

You're the toughest

Spyro's kind words were a warm flame a million miles away, on the other side of ravaging doom. *No, he wasn't*. Figment had never been such, by even half. What a joke.

"If this is another world," he muttered, his voice sandpaper and glass, "i-if this another world, I can get out! I can-can ah, p-portal! Yes, portal!"

He focused as best as he could as the Academy's diseased walls smashed apart nearby, warping and cracking away as the horrible thing grew and grew and grew and grew.

Nothing. No portals, no help. Just the hungering moan of interior walls blowing apart as the rumbling growth shook the floor worse and worse.

"Portal, portal! I'm imagining a portal back! Back to the pokeball! Co-come on!"

Nothing. His imagination was just that, like any other mortal.

"Am I being blocked out? Is it the nature of this world? Ah, what, what!?"

If he could *only* wake up. If he could just return there, then return home, to his real–

Return

Figment's panicked breathing stopped, at last.

Return!

It was all he could think up. In a second, it was all he could think *about*. He swallowed, mining whatever moisture he had left in him, to force the words out properly.

“Bag...return!”

In a flash, there it was. The warmth of the bag, there, in his clawed little hands. He knew there would be no candy inside, nothing to empower him. That wasn't why he called it back.

Everything in it...everything inside...is from that fairy kingdom...

He opened its top flap, then stuck his head in completely. Being smaller than ever, it was easy. Inside, he imagined a portal once again, with all his being, all at once.

It's the only space I have that isn't this world's space...if this world is blocking me, then...

A flash lit off within the bag, and it happened. Figment cackled, half-mad, at the blessed sight of it swirling to life inside. He knew *exactly* where to go.

The Academy sagged, the class walls bending and moaning out as whatever horrible thing was beyond it groaned and swelled bigger, still.

With hardly a second to lose Figment squeezed into the bag and vanished, as the walls blew apart, spraying destruction and ruin everywhere, a tide of black mass billowing in through everything.

15.

The rolling green hills rushed to meet him as Figment spiraled out of the portal, and hit the turf. Warm sunlight found him again, and the terrible, soul-sticking cold began to fade; he wheezed and sat up...to massive, alien plants, each one towering and bending high up over Figment's head. He shook it a bit, closed his eyes, then let them adjust to the light. Sure enough, massive plants. What was all this?

His confusion was welcome, as it drove back the lingering fear he had narrowly escaped.

“Ho, my...” he said, sniffing clean air, and standing back upright. “This...isn't quite...”

He had been aiming for the pokeball, the same way he and the others had warped into them before. Had he been this much off the mark? Come to think...how in all the known worlds had he gotten out of the gigantic ball, to begin with? He certainly hadn't opened it.

Figment dusted himself some and inspected the enormous flora, his free hand finding his chin as he thoughtfully studied it—for about five seconds.

“Grass,” he deduced, before covering his muzzle with both hands. “Gracious, I...”

He looked about, focusing on a massive boulder-sized rock. A pebble.

“I’ve shrunk *this* far down!?” he moaned, stunned. “Gah, of course. Of course, I did! I already wound up small, in that...awful place...then, I was taxed again, escaping it. Of course, I would dwindle to such a state, as this. How completely mortifying...”

Still, he was free. And, in a more hospitable world, at that. Which meant...

“Best to test my theory,” Figment mumbled, before closing his eyes and concentrating. “I can’t just go into another portal yet, I would likely shrink to an atom...so...I imagine, I need to be *bigger*...”

It took a moment, but it came: Figment’s tiny body began to rumble and bulge up higher, slowly inching taller and taller. That now-welcome pressure filled his being as he pushed up to a whole foot in size, then a foot and a quarter, the grass humbly sinking down to his knees, then his ankles. As soon as he had started, however, the growth ceased, leaving him a bit surprised to only be 3 feet tall—close enough to what he had been, prior to his adventure.

“Well,” Figment began, looking himself over, “square one *is* home, when it comes to science. I suppose I’ll regain the knack, if I keep at it. Perhaps that...that *place* affected my abilities?”

At such a size, at least, Figment was able to look around, and what he found was a sight he couldn’t have been more glad to know. The wide open, windswept hills, the stone walls, the bright skies—he knew it like he knew the first new world he had ever seen, because that’s just what it was.

“The Artisans Realm!” he cheered, trying to do an impromptu roll and happily failing with a crash among the grass. “Haha! Perfect! Oh, but I’m so glad to see you again, world!”

As far as he was concerned, the world hugged Figment back; he trembled, then, with a soft, pleasant grunt, ballooned even bigger. He heaved out in one hot push, swelling loudly, blowing up to a whopping ten feet in height and snorting powerfully as he rose to his feet.

“Ah, good, good,” he chirped, curling an expanded bicep, feeling his scales stretch nicely against its modest peak. “Seems I’ll be back up to snuff soon, at this rate! Now...to business!”

A full inventory filed itself out in his thoughts first, then an itinerary to hang them on.

Find Spyro, Cynder, Toothless, and Bartok

No guarantee they’re in their respective worlds, or anywhere specific

No idea what happened in the pokeball, after falling asleep...meaning

No way of knowing where each dragon is

No means of finding out, without hopping to world after world...

Unless you have friends who know magic

Figment nodded rapidly to himself, as a plan began to knit together.

“Bag, return!”

At that, the trusty satchel popped into reality, hugging Figment's body as though it was happy to see him again. Black smoke from the previous world faded off it, and for a moment Figment pulled back in fear, swatting the foul stuff away.

“Gracious! Poor bag, sorry to have left you there. Nasty business.”

The unpleasant recollections surged back, and Figment dodged them by hiding in math.

“Let's see, now,” he pondered. “How large were we, when we went through the portal that led to the fairy kingdom? I need *that* much height, combined, to make it there, assuming it's the same dimensional distance as it was then...”

An obvious thought managed to bite him, at last.

“Though, I ought to make sure of something, before I get big enough to afford to leave...”

The hills rumbled as Figment smiled, closed his eyes, and imagined himself even *bigger*. Raw power surged through him, his athletic build pumping thicker and mightier as he hummed, feeling himself stretch and bulge onward. His horns swelled out as his muzzle pushed ahead, his pectorals and biceps, shoulders and hips and thighs booming as he passed 20 feet, then 23...25...

“Spyro!” Figment bellowed, his growing body throbbing out in warm, pulsing bursts of energy as he literally willed himself greater and greater, his hard-earned power steadily returning. “Spyro! Cynder! ANYONE HERE?”

The wind was good enough to reply as it buffeted his regrown muscle. Otherwise, all was quiet. He wound up for another try, blowing up (with something close to a purr) to 32 feet in height.

“Spyro! Cynder!”

“Did you say *Spyro*?”

A smaller, adult voice cut in, making Figment thud heavily around on gigantic feet. The gigantic dragon snapped his attention to, then fro, then back to *to*, but found no one. Then, the genius thought to look down at his paws.

“Hello, up there!”

There, standing fearlessly close, was another dragon, green-skinned and older. He seemed a more masculine sort, top-heavy and broad-shouldered...yet, possessed of an artist's grace. The carpenter's belt, hammer, chisel, and patterned shoulder pad-sleeves certainly reinforced things.

“Oh! Ah, h-hello,” Figment stammered, surprised enough to be the meeker party. “I didn't see

you there, sir!”

The dragon waved a hand dismissively, grinning a slight bit. His brows were stern, but good-natured and strong.

“No need for 'sir'. I go by Nestor. I'll say, you're a big one, even among dragons, er...”

“Figment! Pleasure to meet you, Nestor! I was—”

“You were calling out for a missing dragon, I couldn't have missed it. I imagine you have as many questions as I do, if you're calling out for him, but let me start: how do you know Spyro?”

Figment's growth stopped, as he hardly wanted to scare away the first friendly face he'd come by. He turned with a few thooming steps to face Nestor properly; finding the dragon stood roughly up to his knees he sat down as gently as he could, in a gesture of civility.

“Let's see, what's the fastest way to explain,” Figment wondered. “Ah, your portals? I came in through one by mistake, from a completely different world. He and I have been through quite a lot, since he wound up traveling abroad with me. How...wait. Might I ask, how long ago did he vanish?”

“Nearly half a year,” Nestor said, nodding solemnly. Figment dropped a shade of color.

“Beg pardon...six months!?”

Again, Nestor nodded, no nonsense, no lie.

“So, you took him with you, then? You must have been out and about, all this time! That bullheaded little dragon, not telling anyone where he was going—”

“It wasn't his fault, s—*Nestor*, I assure you. I accidentally took him away. And if that means he isn't here, then I have to find him back. We were separated recently, you see.”

“I do. You won't have an easy time getting into a portal, at that size, Figment.”

“Heh! Please, don't worry about that. I'm...*stronger* now, than when I first arrived...”

At that, Figment's body rumbled anew and with a soft groan, began to swell even larger, still, surging past 45 feet, then 50. Nestor gawked in spite of himself and backed away, step by startled step; his composure remained, but was in a state of crisis.

“What...kind of magic...is this?” Nestor muttered, wide-eyed, his brows arched as he watched Figment's purple-pink bulk erupt higher and higher, his clawed feet swelling over the grass, the stonework, the hills, until even the green dragon was lost in his spreading shadow.

“Just putting some imagination to work,” Figment replied, his voice growing into a thunderclap that shook down through his feet, into the terrain. “Thanks for letting me know he's gone, just the same, that's very good to know! I promise, I'll bring him back!”

“Imagination!?” Nestor balked, now standing more than 200 feet below Figment, watching as

the dragon's toes bulged farther out on either side of him, without end. "I don't understand!"

Figment peered down over the growing cliff of his chest, smiling.

"There's a lot to explain, indeed...I'll be happy to, when this is all over with!"

The adult dragons across the Artisans Realm all stopped what they were doing, coming out of their stone buildings and turrets and around walls to stare in awe at the rising dragon, looming higher in the distance. They gathered into a crowd, agape, yet hushed as Figment's great shadow spilled over the hillsides, consuming them all in shade.

Nestor eventually took to flight, flapping his wings enough to achieve liftoff; even so, he fell below Figment's colossal knees as the growing dragon trembled all over, closed his eyes in effort and blew himself up even more, doubling his 300-foot size in one booming push.

Still, it wasn't enough, and Figment knew it. Huge as his bulk had swollen, it paled to what it had been before. His size, so staggering to the many dragons and creatures below, was laughably inadequate to the task. He had held an entire planet in his hands before this. He could do better.

Toughest I know

Spyro's words came back, and Figment *exploded* bigger. His arms blew up so massively that they sagged out, his pectorals and belly heaving as his rear and tail pumped back, his thighs bloating wider, his feet trenching down deeper into the hilltop. His neck swelled tremendously as his head pushed into the lower clouds, the sky filling with violet as the dragon rocketed up to 1,500 feet, then 2,100.

With a last shudder he billowed up into the cloud banks, swelling so much that the landscape under his feet tremored and cracked, before a great flash from the skies overtook everything...

16.

Figment landed with enough of a thud to shake some nearby trees, meaning his math had proved as solid as his weight. Patting himself over, he remained every bit as bulky, but stood roughly fifty feet tall, having spent well over half a mile's size in exchange for passage back to the kingdom.

Verdant forests, tall mountains, distant castle, now free of thistle and thorn valleys. Good.

"Well! That's the way," Figment boomed, nodding to himself, as his confidence swelled back up into shape. Calling out was the initial instinct, but he decided that, rather than holler about like some jackanape, he could simply ask for help.

Those citizens no longer trapped by Maleficent's power (meaning, *everyone*) fled at the sight of Figment as he thundered along the dirt road bordering the kingdom, sticking to the calf-high forest.

"I suppose they weren't there to see us save them," he murmured, focused on keeping his current size. "Best keep a healthy distance, then..."

Some thanks might have been nice. But Figment was a dragon on a mission, and such luxuries

would have to wait. The way back to the fairy's house was still relatively fresh in his mind, and he was where he ought to be within a half hour's time. Gigantic strides were helpful, like that.

“Ah,” Figment whispered, as he cleared a snapping herd of trees, “there we go...”

If time moved roughly the same in this realm, then half a year should have been more than enough time to rebuild a home, magically or not. There the humble cottage stood, as good as the day Spyro and he had wrecked it. Well, they, and that *foul bird* of Maleficent's.

Putting that madness out of mind, Figment focused on getting smaller, and compacted his gigantic size down, down, down, slipping to a tidy height of six feet, even. That would work. He grinned crookedly as he knocked on the old wooden door, genuinely excited to see the ladies again. He waited a moment, his smile still on, then knocked again, harder.

Figment began to shift in place, fidgeting with the strap of his bag.

“Hello? Miss Flora, Miss Fauna? Miss Merryweather?”

Again, nothing. He made to knock again when the door slowly opened, and an older woman in green peeked out. Figment, perhaps rudely, craned his neck to see in, making her withdraw with a start.

“Heavens!”

“Oh, no,” Figment started, grinning wide. “Miss, Fauna, it's me, Figment!”

The door nearly shut, then swung wide open, to wide eyes. Where there had been a flicker of fright there was now relieved joy, and the green fairy was out on the porch in a blink.

“Figment! Why...hello! What a surprise! Do come...oh, gracious, yes, come in, quick!”

Just as suddenly, she was pulling the taller dragon in through the door, shutting it fast.

“H-hello!”

“Gracious me, Figment, I hardly recognized you! You've certainly...grown up! And oh, I apologize for the caution, I do,” Fauna gasped, briskly looking back at the door and locking it. “But, these are cautious days, I fear—yes, dreadful business!”

“Dreadful?” he repeated, cocking his head as he took the fairy's hands with his. “How so? What's happened, while I've been gone? Where are the others?”

“Gone out to the kingdom to settle a foul account, I fear,” she sighed, shaking her head. “I remained, to recuperate, after the three of us were ambushed by a terrible foe—wait, where are your friends, the other dragons?”

“It's just me, here, as well,” Figment admitted. “Who is this troublemaker, then? Goodness, did Diablo break free of your prison?”

“No, no, it's something else. A reptile, a vicious, selfish, cruel fiend! He wormed his way into

the castle several weeks earlier and stole an ancient artifact, blessed with great magic. Really, it was only days after you left—”

Figment winced.

“Then, we've only been away...how long?”

“Near to a month, Figment, why?”

“Then time does change, between *all* realms,” he mused, both shocked and fascinated. “But, ah, never mind that. This interloper, does he have a name?”

“One as unpleasant as he is, yes. Ripto, he says.”

Figment suddenly held back a fit of laughter, struggling to stay serious.

“I see...a diminutive type, like some lizard with horns?”

“Why, yes, actually...how did you—”

“We've met,” Figment sighed, clearing his throat. “I suppose he could still menace sufficiently, to be fair—but I should tell you, Fauna, we've dealt with much worse than him.”

“But, this jewel he stole,” the fairy countered, “it's granted him considerable magic! Such that when we confronted him earlier, he managed to seal away my abilities. Shameful as it is, I stayed to mind the house, while Flora and Merryweather went to stop him. The kingdom has managed to drive him back twice, but each time he's returned stronger, and stronger, and I don't think they've the means to manage a third push.”

“Sealed?” Figment murmured. “Then, the other two...”

“Are the only ones imbued with any magic, yes.”

The scenario sorted itself out, in the dragon's head.

“Then, I'll need to put Ripto in his place, before you're able to help...”

“Help?”

“Oh, yes, sorry! Spyro, Cynder, and some other comrades have been to many worlds since we left here, and...we've become separated. Someone as bold and strong as Spyro would have drawn attention here, and he would have come to you first, so...clearly he isn't around...”

“He isn't, I'm sorry to say,” Fauna agreed, nodding. “He would be most welcome.”

“That's why I arrived here—I wanted to see if your magic could either find Spyro and the others, or even bring them back to me, like the spell you used on this magic bag.”

“Oh, my. Figment, any of us would help you at the drop of a hat, my dear. Especially you. But I

can help the least of all at the moment. I'm terribly sorry.”

Figment sagged the tiniest bit, but filled back up.

“He's at the kingdom, you say?”

“Well, he was driven out to the ruins bordering them, from Maleficent's realm...he would either be there or the kingdom, were he on the attack, again...”

“Perfect, I'll see to it,” Figment said, patting her hands with his bigger paws. “Thank you for the information, Fauna, that's extremely helpful!”

“W-why, certainly, but...you're going all alone, Figment?”

The dragon blushed, looking up to the ceiling, before turning to leave.

“I've grown much stronger, so don't fret over me. Heh. I'll be quite alright! Be back shortly, with Flora and Merryweather in tow. Back soon!”

Fauna stared in shock as Figment nearly bumped his head on the way out the door. He hadn't even noticed he'd grown larger, nearing nine feet of scaly muscle. His footsteps shook the porch, then the forest beyond; she went to the window and watched the adorable dragon balloon up and up, surging past the trees as he left.

“...Good luck, dear.”

Merryweather hid behind a tall pillar, deep within the old ruins, trying to catch her breath. Having to hide was the absolute worst, but that's what was on the plate. Flora dove by, unseeing, zipping away from a flurry of orange bolts of magic which blasted everything around as she dodged.

“Foul creature,” Flora snapped, banking away, then returning for a counterattack. “Begone from this world!”

“Bahahaha,” Ripto cackled, the small dinosaur flying after her, the two darting around in a magical dogfight. “How about *you* begone, and save *me* some trouble, witch?”

With one clawed hand, Ripto cast bolt after sizzling bolt; he motioned the other hand in mid-air and commanded a magically-glowing hunk of rock up from the ruins, heaving it at Flora. She saw it last minute and whipped her wand around to stop it, sending it back to Ripto, just as a bolt struck her.

“Flora!” Merryweather gasped, the blue fairy crying out from her hiding spot as the red fairy crashed to the ground.

“So *there* you are!”

Ripto's voice rang out moments before the old stone pillar exploded, hurling Merryweather back. She pinwheeled in the air then slammed against a wall, knocking it back with her as she slid off. Flora forced herself up, battered and tired, lifting her wand as Ripto glided down to Merryweather and

raised both hands. The jewel on his necklace glowed bright as he sneered at her, a shell of dark light engulfing the blue fairy.

“I’ll just seal you, next,” the reptile snarled, only for a bolt of red magic to knock him to the ground. “Gah, hey! You—”

Ripto snapped his little fingers, and Flora was caught in the same shell.

“No!” Merryweather groaned, as both she and Flora were caught fast.

“Let’s see you two flit about, now!”

Ripto made a fist and the shells burst with light, leaving both fairies limp on the dirt. Flora gave out first, fainting, while Merryweather struggled to stay awake, when a great thud cracked the ruins, shaking dust off rock and mortar and wood. Ripto stopped gloating long enough to look about.

“What was that?” he muttered, when a second shock wave hit, harder.

That was when the shadow came, and stayed.

“AHEM.”

The lizard leapt in place, then looked up. And up. *And up*. His cocksure grin evaporated as a titanic dragon loomed high over the ruins themselves, easily 500 feet tall.

“S...Spyro!” Ripto balked, before squinting up at the towering behemoth. “Wait, no...you!? That goofy little dragon from before...Spyro’s friend!? But... you went away! You idiots *left me* here!”

“WELL, I CAN FIX ALL THAT,” Figment boomed, his brawn twitching all over. “YOU STOP ANTAGONIZING THESE NICE FOLK, AND I’LL SEE YOU HOME. DEAL?”

Flora remained out, but Merryweather looked up over her shoulder and started laughing.

“F...Figment! Oh, how perfect...he’ll show you what, you rotten reptile!”

“Oh, shut it,” Ripto hissed, before turning back to Figment. “So, you got stronger, so what? I have, too, you know. Watch!”

With that, the jewel lit up, and the far smaller lizard sent a slew of magical bolts at Figment. The purple dragon folded his impossibly thick arms, calmly letting each one strike his thick muscles and scales, letting them detonate in magical bursts. The fusillade ended with Figment still very-much fine, and very big, and Ripto finally saw fit to back away.

“RIGHT, THEN,” Figment sighed, starting to reach down at him with a massive hand.

“G-get away!” Ripto ordered, as a magical glow overtook Figment’s huge hand and forced it to a halt in the air. “Stay away from me, you hear!?”

Figment patiently applied a mote of effort and the glow-covered hand pushed in again, getting

closer and closer to its target. Ripto cried out in fear, stumbling back, before covering himself with a magical glow of a differing hue.

“Come on...grow,” he commanded, the jewel blazing brighter. “Grow!”

“I THINK YOU WOULD HAVE DONE THAT, FIRST THING, IF YOU WERE CAPABLE OF IT,” Figment thundered, cocking a massive, mansion-sized head. “MEANING, THAT DOESN'T FALL UNDER ANYTHING YOU CAN DO.”

“Shut up!” Ripto wailed, taking to flight again. “I'll figure it out! I'm getting more powerful by the minute! I've already learned a lot, you know!”

“FUNNY, SO HAVE I!”

Figment rumbled all over terribly, letting Ripto see, as he boomed even *bigger*.

“W...what? No! S-stop it!”

The shadow poured over the farther reaches of the ruins as Figment casually willed himself larger, his muscles straining with mass, his shoulders ballooning against his thickening neck. His pink-plated pectorals surged, throbbing effortlessly fuller, until he had blown up another 300 feet, pushing his way up to a massive, imposing, periphery-blotting eight hundred feet in height. The highest parapets and columns hardly made it past his feet.

“WILL YOU KINDLY ACCOMPANY ME, THEN?” Figment asked, nicely, as he loomed so large he could sit and tower over the ruins, like they were a model set.

Ripto seethed in frustration as he flew back along the ruins, darting between chunks of broken outer walls, past a withered courtyard. At his tremendous size, Figment easily kept sight of him.

“Get him, Figment!” Merryweather cheered, through her exhaustion.

“ARE YOU TWO ALRIGHT, MISS MERRYWEATHER?” he checked, taking his sights off of the fleeing reptile. “SORRY I ARRIVED LATE, BUT I WENT TO THE HOUSE FIRST.”

“Never mind all that, Figment, just...s-stop that nasty thing!”

“RIGHT!”

As he looked back up Figment caught sight of Ripto, farther off. He also caught sight of something else, something that made his grin disappear. The dinosaur had crashed headlong into a strange structure, a massive mountain of gathered stones, compressed together into a 1,200-foot mass of rock. It only took seconds for the dragon to understand why it bothered him.

“WAIT, THAT...IS THAT...DIABLO?”

“We...moved him over here, where there was less...chance of magic...getting close enough for that stupid bird to absorb! It took half the kingdom to drag it, inch by i-inch...we couldn't use our magic to move him...”

Figment wasted no further time.

A humongous hand shot out through the air over the ruins, big enough to catch Ripto's grain-sized self between Figment's palm, and the stone prison, which rose even higher than he stood. He made a fist, brought it back and opened it to reveal Ripto there, a dust mite in his vast palm, cowering and sniffing.

"I-it's not fair," he moaned, pounding Figment's huge scales in anger. "I was winning!"

"IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE," Figment rumbled, irritated and relieved. "YOU NEARLY WOKE UP SOMETHING A LOT WORSE THAN YOURSELF—"

He paused, bringing Ripto up closer to his massive eye, looking him over. The tiny lizard backed away, and a massive claw curled down to hold him still.

"WHERE..." Figment began, squinting closer still. "THAT JEWEL, WHERE—"

The huge stone prison rattled. It rattled a second time, then quaked to life as Figment looked up to it. A tiny light glinted for a moment as he saw the jewel dance against the outer stones, then slip down between a single crevice, vanishing inside.

"OH, NO—"

The tower-sized prison cracked down the sides, partially splitting them, the edges bleeding a terrible smoldering magic. The apertures separated as mounds of pitch-black feathers fluffed free, getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Figment stepped back over the ruins as the cracks split wider, a set of plumed pectorals bursting out the front, followed by massive, broad shoulders on either side; the snapping topside blew apart after, and a huge, yellow beak shot up into the air.

A booming *caw* broke the air as Diablo emerged, and swallowed some tiny thing whole.

The jewel. A creature that absorbed magic power had not only been released, but had swallowed an artifact that was *pure magic*.

"What the *heck* is that!?" Ripto balked, from the relative safety of Figment's palm.

"DIABLO," Figment growled, as the towering man-bird burst into mad animal laughter, his overgrown black muscles rumbling even bigger, flooding with strength.

"Oh, that's great," Merryweather grouched as she crept over to Flora, and slowly attempted to move her to safety. "That's just great!"

"HAAAAAAW," Diablo huffed, a thick streak of magic billowing from his beak, like smoke.

Figment felt the air shift as bolts of energy threaded the bird's 1,500-foot tall body, feeding him raw, unbridled power. His once-feral eyes flared bright gold, cruel and intelligent, as his muscles tensed in on themselves; his taut black biceps condensed tighter, then blew up against his sides, pulsing bigger in bursting waves. His laterals ballooned up under swelling triceps, his back muscles blowing

out around, then up against his swelling neck. Both quaking thighs erupted larger, his toes smashing the ruins into further dismay as he bellowed, throbbing up to 1,600 feet...1,700 feet...

Figment grimaced as he found himself not even half the colossal bird's size; yet with a little calm and focus he began to rumble all over, and burst up and up. His feet sank, and sank, and sank, breaking through the crust and stone on his share of the ruins, pillars toppling against the lower curve of his purple feet as he blew up to match Diablo's size, then pushed up past it to 2,000 feet, even.

“THAT'S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU!” Figment roared, as best he knew how.

Diablo didn't even bother replying as he chuckled to himself, lost in the throes of godhood. His eyes glowed even brighter as the bolts of energy snapped and cracked and redoubled, making him spasm and quake, until the ground and mountains shook with him. Every avian muscle remained flexed painfully tight—yet, the growth was worsening, and every tensed sinew groaned and surged bigger, pulling his growing plumage every-which-way.

“DID YOU HEAR?” Figment started, putting Diablo in a tight bear-hug. “I SAID—”

Diablo's entire body *tripled* in size. Then, it rumbled worse, and tripled, again. And *again*.

Even Figment was caught off guard, the huge dragon suddenly hugging the bird's heaving chest, then his midsection, as a wall of feathered abdominal bulk burst out against him. His gigantic arms spread out around Diablo's 46,000-foot body, the dragon suddenly having to regard the creature in miles. Yellow plates as wide as roadways swelled as the raven's feet crashed through the ruins, growing out into the borders of the kingdom, smashing through stone and tree and dirt alike in one furrowing grind. Tail-feathers several miles long stretched out and up along a mountainside behind him, his rear fluffing out against it and growing up its contours without rest.

Figment was suddenly a mere teddy bear, *a plaything*, even at half a mile tall, as Diablo had blown up to nearly nine miles in size in less than ten seconds. At eleven he felt the towering man-raven rumble even deeper, as more and more magical energy cascaded off of his bulk, striking the landscape in shattering gouges. Two mammoth arms rose high, commanding lightning down from the clouds; they lanced Diablo's colossal muscles, feeding the booming bird more power than he could imagine.

“CAAAAW! C-CAAAHAAAHAHA!”

Figment focused second time, but the raven's feathers boofed out against him, a growing jungle of black, confounding fluff; the disorientation was enough to throw him a moment, and by second twelve the feathered leviathan *quadrupled* in size. The explosion of growth was so much that the air pushed back across the landscape, rocking the kingdom, which sat precariously between the beast's ever-growing, hulking thighs.

At nearly 35 miles tall, even sitting down to a more manageable 18 miles, Diablo's beak was already well past the clouds, which submissively crept away as his pectorals blew up through them. Both raised arms flexed even harder, vast, castle-crushing hands closing into merciless fists as the god-bird finally deigned to look down at Figment. His monstrous beak had to force itself between both overloaded pecs to manage it, each muscle booming out of control on either side.

“YOU,” the immense man-raven thundered, his voice shaking even Figment. It sounded rough

and callous, and the idea that Diablo had never spoken a single word in his life before was not absent from Figment's thoughts. ***“WHERE...MALEFICENT?”***

Figment truly didn't have time for this. This was supposed to be a quick stop-off, not a quest.

“SHE ISN'T HERE,” the dragon huffed, trying to puff himself up. Of course, thinking of doing that made it happen, and in seconds Figment was billowing up to match the titanic raven's sitting height, putting him at about 20 miles tall. “DIABLO, I'D LIKE TO *PLEASE*—”

“WHERE...SHE, NOW?”

“SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY.”

Figment redoubled his focus not on himself, but on Diablo. For all he knew, he was still perfectly capable of absorbing the bird's size, by touch; he'd eaten plenty of candy, after all. It could even blow him up big enough to rack up enough size for travel tax—but first, the fairies needed saving.

Ripto's seal is broken, Figment thought as he watched Diablo glare, from his mountainous perch. The bird's expression darkened as he took in Figment's evasion, and didn't like it at all. *Ripto's seal is broken, the fairies already have their powers back...*

He glanced off, on the chance he might see the tiny glow of Miss Flora and Merryweather flying off, but no such luck. Had it really not worked?

“BRING HER BACK, THEN.”

The rough voice was smoothing out into a deep, sinister velvet, as Diablo made his first ever command. He wasn't getting any larger, thankfully, but the avian was no less awesome a sight, for it. Still, Figment could feel his powers returning quickly enough; by his guess, he would have to remove that jewel before Ripto's seal could be undone. He rolled his huge scaly shoulders, and folded his massive arms authoritatively.

“...ONLY IF YOU GIVE ME WHAT YOU SWALLOWED.”

Diablo tilted his head, blinking a rapid bird-blink, before bellowing in anger. His monstrous physique exploded even larger and stronger as they doubled in mass, bulging so big that it looked hard for the avian hulk to even move.

“NO! YOU BRING HER BACK TO ME, LIZARD! NOW!”

This would all have to be done quickly. A brief test of his abilities was in order, anyhow.

“NO. I DON'T THINK I WILL, *BIRD*.”

All 35 miles of Diablo moved, and the planet groaned. One immense foot slammed the firmament, then the other, as the raven stood up, and up, and up, parting whatever clouds had dared to approach his bulk. A torrent of golden smoke streaked from Diablo's mouth as he roared, more and more bands of power lashing around his bulk.

“DO NOT TOY WITH ME!” he boomed, starting to tremble with rage. ***“BRING HER BACK, BEFORE I SNAP YOU IN TWO, AND SWALLOW BOTH HALVES!”***

There was a flicker of pity, there, even as Figment braced himself in Diablo's shadow.

“I SAID, NO. OBEY YOUR SUPERIOR, RUNT!”

Figment had learned a lot in his time abroad; one thing that was still new, however, was bluffing. He could manage being big enough to hold entire planets and being more powerful than gods...but being rude? *Well.*

“RUNT!?”

Diablo swelled uncontrollably larger, each breath inflating him taller and wider, thicker and heavier. His massive toes crushed the landscape as he heaved with pulsing brawn, his feathers flared all the way out. To be sure, it was a legitimately intimidating gesture—especially when the one doing it was blowing up past 50 miles tall...no, 60...

Feet as big as entire mountain ranges tore into the forests and hills and lakes, clouds eddying in fear about his calves, then ankles, all as Figment watched the avian expand.

“ONLY MALEFICENT...CAN COMMAND ME!”

Instead of trying to grow to match or even compete with Diablo, Figment stayed put, even as Diablo inflated himself up to 80 miles tall, nearing half a million feet of bulging muscle and plumage. Figment seemed smaller and smaller as the raging bird trembled with power, his eyes blasting yellow light as he belched a volcanic geyser of gold magic into space, flexed tight, and exploded even *bigger!*

“IF YOU WON'T DO IT...THEN I DON'T NEED THIS WORLD!”

Uh-oh.

Figment's plan was turning around on him, and fast. He *needed* Diablo larger as a new plan formed, but the bird was busy raving and pumping his huge arms as he spread his feet over the continent, shook, and blew more and more magic out of his bellowing maw. His back bulk swelled into a screaming mound of muscle that loomed over his own head as he throbbed loudly, then boomed higher once again, blinding energy pouring off his massive, growing form. At over 200 miles in size, standing over one million feet through and beyond the atmosphere, Diablo was finally big enough, and Figment made his move.

A fight wouldn't end this. But a cool head would.

As he surged up past 10 times Figment's size the huge dragon took off into a leap over the kingdom, forcing his wings into flight. He shot through the clouds and past as Diablo screamed and cursed Figment, his growing beak opened wide.

At 300 miles, Diablo had swollen so prodigiously massive, so full of muscle and girth, that his huge arms moved too slow to possibly swat Figment away as he shot up into the open beak and down

Diablo's throat. The enraged raven continued to balloon bigger and bigger, his muscles overflowing over themselves, crashing and bulging and rubbing into each other as he surged to 500 miles...700...each burst was more intense, more powerful, as if perfectly matching his anger.

“I’LL CRUSH IT ALL, IF YOU DON’T!” he bellowed, not realizing what Figment had done seconds before. ***“YOU BRING HER BACK TO ME! BRING...HER...B...BUH-BAAAAAAACK!”***

As he billowed up to nearly 1,000 miles, as his feet outgrew the entire kingdom on its borders, as his tail feathers loomed across an entire ocean and multiple islands in uncharted lands, something happened. Diablo gagged, then shook his beak in stunned quiet. He blinked, then coughed harder, bringing hands big enough to cup an entire lake up to his huge neck, feeling.

Angry as he was, his glowing eyes were darting about in thought. Before he could guess what was happening a hole in the world ripped open, floating out in space. Through it, a startled Diablo saw a dark, pink tunnel, through which Figment barreled out, into the open, floating through the cosmos.

“WHAT...”

“I’LL BE TAKING THIS, THEN,” Figment chirped, as the jewel suddenly swelled up so large that it fit neatly in the dragon's colossal hand.

He waited a moment for Diablo to understand properly, as the looming raven's enormous face took up his entire view of the cosmos. The gargantuan bird blinked, then made...a face.

“WHAT IS THAT?” he caw-boomed, shaking the world below. He wasn't getting bigger, thankfully...but he remained a staggering colossus. Figment could fix that.

“NEVER YOU MIND, DIABLO,” he huffed, floating off a few 'relative' feet over the planet. “THIS FELL INTO YOUR PRISON, YOU ATE IT, AND YOU’VE ASCENDED INTO A GODLIKE TITAN. THERE.”

Diablo looked himself over, then snorted.

“SO, WHAT. SHE STILL ISN'T HERE. WHY? WHY WON'T YOU BRING HER BACK?”

That pang of pity returned. Beneath all that power, the raven was still struggling with a hole in his lousy, evil little heart. *He really cared about her. Huh.*

“BECAUSE SHE'S EVIL, THAT'S WHY. I WON'T LIE TO YOU.”

The massive avian didn't even flinch at the revelation, because he already knew that full-well. The thought that *should* have gotten to Figment five minutes ago suddenly reached him, and the dragon adjusted the conversation accordingly.

“WELL, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT: I DON'T WANT YOU HERE, CAUSING TROUBLE. YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HERE ALONE, RIGHT?”

Diablo eyed the smaller dragon, his vast, sky-sized eyes narrowing.

“...NO. NOT IF SHE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE.”

“OKAY. THEN, I SUGGEST A CEASEFIRE. WE AREN'T ENEMIES, ANYMORE, I WON'T ATTACK YOU, IF YOU DON'T ATTACK ME. I KNOW WHERE MALEFICENT WENT, WHEN SHE LEFT. IF...*IF* I TAKE YOU TO HER...WILL YOU BEHAVE?”

Diablo's eyes widened, even though they tried to stay cautiously lidded.

“...YES.”

“ALRIGHT, THEN. I HAVE SEVERAL THINGS TO DO, FIRST, SEVERAL STOPS TO MAKE...BUT, IF YOU LET ME TAKE YOU WITH ME, IN MY TRAVEL BAG—”

“NO!” Diablo boomed, snorting angrily. **“NO MORE PRISONS!”**

Hmm.

“ALRIGHT, FAIR ENOUGH. JUST TRAVEL *WITH* ME, THEN. I WON'T LET YOU NEAR MALEFICENT, IF YOU MAKE TROUBLE FOR ME, OR ANY OF THE OTHER FRIENDS WE'RE GOING TO PICK UP ALONG THE WAY. YOU DON'T LIKE SOME OF THEM, AND THAT'S FINE. BUT, NO TROUBLE. THEN, I PROMISE, I'LL GET YOU BACK TO HER. DEAL?”

Diablo glowered, giving Figment an astonishingly good death stare, as he loomed up in the heavens. Still, the god-bird nodded, quick and mean.

“FINE. DEAL.”

Okay, good. Lovely. Almost done.

“DEAL. THANK YOU FOR WORKING WITH ME, DIABLO, I APPRECIATE IT.”

“WE'RE GOING, YES? NOW?”

“YES, WE ARE. AS SOON AS I GET YOU TO A BETTER SIZE—”

“NO! I STAY BIG, I STAY STRONG. YOU DON'T MAKE ME SMALLER. DEAL? DEAL!”

“...THEN, I *WON'T* SHRINK YOU DOWN. FAIR ENOUGH. BUT, I WILL BE RIGHT BACK. IF YOU WANT TO BE THAT HUGE, JUST...WAIT THERE, PLEASE.”

The 1,000-mile behemoth clicked his beak impatiently, following Figment with his mean eyes as the dragon sailed back down to the world. When he was sure the tiny dragon was out of sight of him, he finally preened his massive chest, and sighed in relief.

“I do feel it,” Miss Flora said, sighing in relief. “Yes, the magic is back to us! For certain and true, I feel myself again!”

The red fairy hugged Figment thankfully, making him creak from the effort of containing all that size he had compacted down into himself. It was the only way to fit back in their house as the three old ladies doted on him, piling food and drink on their table, at which the embarrassed dragon sat. He was already nearly as big as their ceiling, and was visibly shaking with strain from holding so much size in. Clearly, just a little more training was needed, before containment could be more easily imagined, and kept. The whole effort was chalked up to practice, given there was no other alternative.

“Glad you're all well, again, ladies,” Figment replied, grinning down over them as they fussed and patted and smiled. “But, as to my request...”

“Oh, sure, sure,” Merryweather said glibly. “Since we know Spyro and Cynder, at least, we can reach out to find them. Easy.”

“Well, it is rather new to us, honestly,” Flora corrected, cutting the blue fairy a little look.

“In theory, it should be doable, though, dear,” Fauna added, giving the huge dragon's sides a motherly pat. “All of us working together should be able to manage it. Anyone else you try to find, that we haven't met, well...hopefully, they're there, when we reach out.”

That would have to do, then.

“I'd be terribly grateful!” Figment said, as Flora stopped moving long enough to grab his much bigger paw in her hands.

“Oh, nonsense, it's the least we can do! A good dragon like you, saving us all, twice! Now, ladies, let's begin, no time to waste...”

The three fairies took up hands and formed a circle, by the hearth. Figment quietly watched, restraining a sudden, overflowing hope. No matter what, after this point, there would be no more separations, no more being lost. That was over.

The dream, that...that horrid world, it was wrong. That voice had been wrong. He loved Blarion dearly, and was happy to be a part of that world...but he could do more, be more. There was too much proof, now, how powerful he really could grow, if challenged, if *pushed*. There was too much evidence, now, to think differently, to go back. That was science, after all.

The fairies kept their heads low, murmuring gently among themselves, until:

“Found him,” Merryweather said, suddenly, pulling Figment's attention.

“Spyro?” he asked, leaning in over them.

“He...I found her, too! Cynder! She's near to him...very near...”

Figment had to restrain himself as he bulged bigger, pumping up into the rafters in burgeoning waves of excitement. His thick tail curled in a happy loop, thudding the floor beside them.

“Really! That's wonder—”

“Oh, my,” Fauna gasped, before Flora and Merryweather both shuddered, and pulled back.

Figment's tail stopped.

“W...what is it?” the dragon asked, cocking his brows high.

“There's another presence, near them,” Flora spoke, gravely. “It's become so great, it...it nearly crushed everything else! Heavens...”

“That awful aura, that black tide,” Fauna added, putting her hands to her face.

“Maleficent,” Merryweather huffed, more angry than afraid. “That foul, no good—how is she there, with them? Why is her presence so...so colossal?”

Figment gulped, a wave of terror brushing under his scales at bad angles.

“Oh, no,” he panted, biting his lip. “They're with her. I put her away in another world, last time, to keep her imprisoned, but it...that terrible hand I saw...she really has grown that powerful!? That monstrously huge!? Oh, no, no...”

The fairies listened on, looking to one another, then back up at Figment, who visibly shook.

“Please, Figment, dear, calm down,” Fauna began, rubbing his huge sides comfortingly. “Whatever happened to make her so powerful, it's surely nothing you could have foreseen.”

“So, quit wasting time fretting, and go get them,” Merryweather ordered, her hands to her hips, her expression firm. “You're stronger than that no-good reptile, anyhow. So, go.”

Figment gathered the loose bolts and bits of himself, then swallowed.

“Y...yes, you're right, you're right. Can't come unglued. Thank you, Merryweather. Thank all three of you, in fact, you've saved us! I can't tell you how much I appreciate this, ladies!”

“While I might normally consider this proper compensation,” Flora began, “I still say, if you can do us one last favor, Figment...”

“Yes?” he patiently asked, feeling himself balloon another few creaking feet larger.

“Well,” Fauna started, “if you could—”

“Go beat her big, dumb head in, Figment!” Merryweather finished, grinning.

For once, Figment had the same exact look as her, a crooked grin forming.

“Gladly.”

The partially-wrecked landscape was waiting when Figment stepped back out, and another pang of guilt broke through his bravado. The dragon winced as he bulged larger, and larger, starting to tower over the ruins of the continent. Far, far beyond it all, the sky loomed yellow and gold, as Diablo's vast feet consumed everything. The bird had grudgingly moved to another side of the continent, yet was still enormously visible.

“Time for a real test, then,” Figment sighed as the now 400-foot dragon closed his eyes, and concentrated harder than before. “Thankfully, no harm has been done, for it...no damage, at all...when we leave, this entire world will be as clean as a campsite!”

Reality stubbornly resisted as a few trees un-crushed, rising back up to form. After a few seconds the entire forest sprang to life, green and calm, then the lakes refilled, as flat craters curled back up to their usual elevation, rocks and roads and mountains and hills all reversing up into their previous states.

“It's all fine, again, it's quite fixed,” Figment told himself as the kingdom began to rebuild in the distance, brick by brick, the town around it building back up once more. The strain was considerable, this time, and with his powers still returning, Figment could only focus on it alone; this meant the hold on his size slipped loose, and he had to stop and take to the air as his rumbling purple body exploded bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

“Oop! I-it's all as right and proper a-as...t-the rain!”

Again and again, he roared larger, having to pull himself up higher into the skies every time he blew up in size. He was half a mile in two seconds, then boomed up to 10 miles just seconds later, rising higher and higher to keep his swelling feet off the newly-restored world.

Diablo hardly noticed as the world knit back together, under the returning clouds at his toes. All the bird noticed was Figment, billowing up to the size of his country-dwarfing beak, before exploding up to 1,100 miles, floating just over the planet's surface. The humongous raven snorted, taking a sour note how Figment was a head taller than him, now.

“WE'RE GOING?” he grumbled bitterly.

“YES, WE'RE GOING. WATCH.”

Rather than bother pointing, Figment looked to the West, and Diablo turned to watch as a new portal swelled open, spreading wider and taller, on and on. The bird's unflappable demeanor kept as he coldly stared, seeing the opening double in size, then double again, until even their massive bodies could manage it.

Within was a truly, completely horrid sight.

Figment recoiled, though the portal held fast in space. He had opened up the same portal that he had tricked Maleficent into taking, but it was different now. Black, fluid-like streaks swirled and churned, inside, a maelstrom of bad dreams and misery, and Figment closed it back up, wide-eyed.

“OPEN IT!” Diablo roared, wheeling about on him, his huge bulk swelling out. **“WHY DID YOU CLOSE IT!?”**

Intimidating as he was, Diablo's caws went unnoticed. Figment was too busy drifting back, stunned to silence.

“HEAVENS,” he gasped, collecting himself yet again. “THAT...THAT WAS WHERE...”

There was no denying the proof. The horrible darkness that nearly seeped out of the portal was the very same that had clung about the hellish version of his beloved Academy. He'd just escaped from it, gotten free, before it had destroyed and consumed him.

The world he was supposed to go to...*was* the nightmare world.

They're in there? Figment thought, frantically working it out. *Spyro and Cynder, at least, are in that terrible place? How?*

Something had to have happened with the pokeball. There was no other explanation. He had wound up alone, on the same world as them, *somehow*, and escaped before being killed. But, if the fairies were right, then the others were surely alive for the time being—otherwise, they wouldn't have been magically detected. The ungodly miasma had been outside of the Academy...was it everywhere, outside? They must have seen an opening into the outside region of the world, then, meaning if they went straight through, they would be torn apart, overtaken...

“OPEN IT, I SAID!” Diablo boomed, snapping him out of his thoughts.

“WE NEED ANOTHER WAY IN! IF WE GO STRAIGHT INTO THAT PORTAL, NOW, WE WON'T SURVIVE. UNDERSTAND?”

“MAYBE YOU WON'T,” the god-raven snorted.

“JUST, FOLLOW ME. WE'LL HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY.”

Setback after setback, still. Even with all his powers.

Figment cleared his throat and turned the other way, in space. It didn't matter so much what direction he opened the next portal; truth be told, he was just turning from the earlier sight to get away from it.

A new portal split, then yawned wide open, and Diablo all-but shoved Figment aside, going through it without another thought.

“AFTER YOU, THEN,” the immense dragon growled, brushing his bulky arm. As he followed along, something happened behind him—something even Figment hadn't dared to imagine. He would never have even *conceived* of it, to begin with.

The portal he had opened and closed, was opening again.

Figment rubbed his city-sized eyes; when he opened them, it was still there. *No, it was larger!*

“WHAT...IN THE...”

It kept swelling wider, larger, higher, Figment nervously backing toward the new portal. As he gawked something bulged out into the void of space, clawing through the black swirl, stretching the massive portal even wider as it found purchase. It was the hand, back again.

Vast, cosmos-filling claws extended as far as Figment could see, looming higher and higher up, overhead. All told, the hand was even bigger than before, so much so that the emerging palm blotted the stars above out, more than large enough to push far past the new portal, which Figment dove into as he cried out. As his own portal closed, so too did the monstrous hand, taking the planet and moon and everything within it hostage, having very nearly taken him, too.

BETWEEN

How? How had she found him? How was a portal opened, without his doing!?

Question upon question attacked as Figment and Diablo flew through the space between spaces, between realities, tumbling and rolling through what he figured was 'the air'. That was surely Maleficent's hand he had seen, same as last time! But he hadn't opened *that* portal, meaning...she had done it? But, how? She was flesh and blood, not a being of imagination, like him!

None of it made any sense. He could have sworn no one else was on the world he had banished her too, before. He was sure. What could she have fed on, to have become *that* incredibly powerful!?

Think, think, Figment ordered himself as Diablo fluffed out, clearly not enjoying the trip.

He was so close to the end, he knew it. Yet, he couldn't simply barge into that world and set things right, not with it crawling with pure darkness and nightmares. Had she done that to the world, in that short of a span of time? Did time move the same, there?

“We need a way in, that puts us in a building, or underground,” he mused, mid-flight, “anywhere that there's an interior...but, there were no interiors when I dropped Maleficent there, none that I found at the time. That world seemed so barren...”

“***BAD!***” Diablo roared, unhappily trying to right himself. “***HATE THIS!***”

“YOU'LL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT!” Figment shouted, as they tumbled forth. “WE DON'T HAVE ANY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TRAVEL—”

Wait

Figment thought over his own words, before it hit him, like lightning.

There was a way. There was!

Maleficent was, by all evidence, clearly grabbing for Figment, that much he had gathered. That made this a sneak-mission, while she was chasing after him. Thankfully, Diablo hadn't seen her hand, otherwise the deal would have likely been off. Gracious, he might have offered Figment *to* her, right there and then. Temptations surged to strand the nasty creature somewhere, but pity stopped him.

As for Maleficent, she hadn't found that reality right away. That meant there was presumably time that she would need to relocate him, after each leap. That gave him at least some breathing room to do something he was well-versed at, being an inventor's assistant:

Inventing.

17.

China was even more beautiful and mystifying the second time, a mist-cradled world of high mountain peaks and deep, unknowable temples. Had he not been on a severe schedule, he'd have gladly taken some time to play tourist.

When they both landed, Figment was still big enough to put a serious hole in the ground, as their impacts shook the hills. He wasted no time in getting back up and taking stock of himself, then Diablo; he stood roughly 500 feet tall, with Diablo being about four hundred.

“Smaller!?” Diablo groaned, flexing his bulk in surprise. “You said I wouldn't shrink, lizard!”

“That's fine enough,” he said, ignoring the raven. Instead, he thudded up a high hill, the avian puffing out angrily behind him. “This should be a good enough size to still do some building...”

“HEY!”

Figment reached the hilltop, looked about, then shouted:

“Mushu! Mushu! HAS ANYONE SEEN A HUGE, POWERFUL RED DRAGON?”

He paused, then thumped a palm on his own head, chiding himself.

“Chinese, of course, heh,” he laughed, trying to adjust internally to the idea that being stalked by a dark goddess through time and space was no excuse for missing the obvious. “Not English...let's see, what time period would this...would it be proto-sinitic, middle...ah, no time...”

He imagined he would be understood, instead, as it constituted more practice:

“HELLO! IS Mushu ABOUT? HE'S A HUGE, STRONG, BULKY SPECIMEN—”

“Well, bang my gongs! Haha!”

An equally-gigantic voice answered, far off, though it was getting closer, and fast. Before he knew it a massive cluster of muscles and scales collided, behind him, knocking him over—as well as the approaching Diablo. The bird tumbled back heavily (cursing a streak) as Figment was hugged tight, finding two massive red arms around him.

“Figment! You ol' emperor of a dragon! I never thought I'd see you here,” Mushu boomed, the bigger dragon beaming down at him, whiskers up high in the air. “You lookin' alright, kept fit, good for you! What you doin' in China? Where the rest of y'all?”

“DON'T IGNORE ME!” Diablo barked, coming right up between the two huge dragons, jabbing a mad feathered finger into Figment's pectorals. “YOU SHRANK ME! YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T, YOU LIED—”

“No, I didn't,” Figment countered, thudding back a step; Mushu lurched away in shock, his ears perked up. “We all lose size, when we go to different worlds! It did it to me, as well, see?”

“OUR DEAL IS OFF!”

“No, no, it's still very-much on. If you need to be bigger again, if it makes you feel better, I'll help you grow *extra-massive*, alright? But for now, we need to stay smaller. I can't get you in to see Maleficent, if you're too big, too soon, okay?”

The musclebound bird puffed all over, bristling and fuming. His eyes darted back and forth, calculating, and he stormed away a few paces, grumbling incomprehensibly to himself.

“New entourage?” Mushu asked, leaning in.

“A deal was struck,” Figment sighed, rubbing his gigantic temples. “I'll explain soon. But for now we're all on a tight schedule, and I could very-much use your help.”

“Hah, for you, Fig? Anything. Man, you got me so big, nobody here makes a lick of fun! I'm large and in charge, haha! Hey, you jus' say what it is, I got you.”

It was admittedly fun seeing him like this, so confident and happy with himself.

“Blueprints,” Figment answered, smiling. “Any blueprints for flying machines that your best and brightest have. Spyro and Cynder—and I think several other friends—they're captive!”

“They got my boy and girl!?” Mushu exclaimed, running a huge hand over his ears. “Oh, that ain't half of right! So, you need them blueprints...”

“To save them! We need to sneak into a very hostile, very dangerous world, and the only way I know to safely do it is to build a craft that can house us!”

“Ah, we a little *big*, for any kind of inside of *anything*, you get me, Fig?” Mushu chuckled, seeming too happy at the concept to be taken aback.

“Heh, point taken—we would have to build big, yes. But, are there any designs for—”

“Probably at the Emperor's place, they got all kinds of crazy stuff drawn up—”

“Excellent! I'm going to try something radical and make a ship for us, out of imagination, given we have so little time for full construction, with a dedicated crew and whatnot.”

“You gonna build a ship, yourself?” Mushu asked, finally fully puzzled.

“Yes.”

“You can do that? What, you a carpenter?”

“I’ve assisted on builds,” Figment assured, folding his muscled arms. “I doubt we have the time to recruit any humans to help with the build, so I’ll have to create whole-cloth. I shall have to practice a bit with what time we have, but I can manage it! Now, how soon can we get hold of the—”

“Blueprints? Shoot, man, you jus’ leave that to me,” Mushu laughed, waving a dismissive hand. “You do what you gonna do, I’ll be right back. I’mma have a talk with the big man, get what you need.”

“You can do that?” Figment mooned, impressed. Mushu puffed up.

“Hah! Can I do—you jus’ wait here and do your imaginin’ thing.”

Mushu thundered off, leaving Figment to a very impatient Diablo. The bird clacked his beak in mounting annoyance as the dragon rubbed his thick palms together, and concentrated on a large patch of open turf.

“Never quite tried anything *this* ambitious,” Figment murmured, getting his thoughts right and proper. He knew the fundamentals of aerial design and engineering, to be sure...but Blarion had always helmed the actual design process. Figment was the dreaming, and Blair was the *doing*. Now, it was all him.

He thought back over the basics of every design they had done before. Flying machines were always part and parcel of any dreamers’ repertoire, but this was new. They would need total encapsulation, aerodynamic structure, capacity...what materials would be it made of? He could imagine the stone and minerals of China into a new form, but how heavy would that be?

He thought, and thought, until an ovular mess of warped wood and stone appeared, thudding down into the ground with a telltale crash. The one porthole he imagined at the front cracked, then blasted open with a brilliant shatter.

“Bad,” Diablo offered, helpfully.

“Yes, it is rather,” Figment muttered glumly, before trying again. “Didn’t account for proper tension, so...”

He tried again. And again. And again.

The ship, as it were, shifted and warped, over and over. Rudders were added at the back, then scrapped, then put back, in different places. He knew what was more or less needed, but the truth was crashing in even harder than the ship: he wasn’t an engineer. All the power to create, to cheat at reality, and none of it mattered, since he didn’t know how to make it.

When he created a full ball of plastic, it deflated on itself around the weight the porthole created. When he removed the porthole, all he got was a closed ball, then realized they would all suffocate in it. So, he imagined a sturdy floor, built supports of steel, like for a building, and then the rafters—only, when he closed an exterior around them, bits protruded and snapped.

By the time Mushu returned, Figment was taking a break, a bad one.

“Have thee no fear, y'all! I hath returned, heh!”

The red dragon's big voice boomed, and Figment turned to see him looming up over the high hill to the mountain's side. He was all smiles as he opened a massive hand and dumped a mess of scrolls down before Figment.

“That was fast, Mushu!” Figment said, getting back up. “Thank you!”

“Course it was, they know me there,” Mushu chuckled as he turned away, showing roughly nine hundred arrows harmlessly embedded in his thick muscles. He didn't even seem to know they were there. “So, you jus' pick you one, and let's get going!”

“You're coming, too?” Figment said, blinking.

“You know I am! My boy's in trouble! I ain't havin' that!”

“So, we need to design for three, then! But you really should know...where we're going, there's a very, very powerful dragoness, waiting to crush us. She's grown unbelievably massive!”

“So?” Mushu huffed, flexing his tremendous bulk. “We jus' take us some of them candies, and blow up bigger and stronger! Here, lemme start!”

Not bothering to ask, he reached over and opened Figment's bag, pulling Figment closer along with the strap.

“Wait! I don't have any left!”

As he opened the flap and twisted the bag upside down, only one thing tumbled out—and indeed, it was not a piece of candy.

“Ah!” the green dragon yelped as he fell out, quickly flapping himself into a panicked flight. “What was that...ah!”

Figment and Mushu both yelped, a bit more loudly, as the gnat-sized thing fluttered up to them, taking in their sheer size with a tiny gasp.

“Wait, is that...” Figment muttered, squinting at the bug. “N..Nestor?”

Baffled and disoriented, the tiny green dragon wavered, before dropping down in resignation, and Figment's gigantic hands were there to intercept.

“I, huh, I apologize,” Nestor gasped as he rested against Figment's colossal, warm palm. “B-but,

I had to come with you. I had to make sure Spyro was okay...”

“Bug?” Diablo cawed, narrowing his cruel eyes. His beak clacked once.

“Friend,” Figment corrected, as Mushu watched. “Clearly, he stowed away in my bag, before I left his world. I won’t say I’m sorry to see you, Nestor...but really, I do think you’re only imperiling yourself, here.”

“I...I know I’m smaller than you, or, ah...your...”

He finally looked out beyond the rim of Figment’s hand to see Mushu giving him a salute, and...well, a very big, *mean*-looking bird.

“I know, Spyro isn’t present, but bear with me,” Figment continued. “We’re about to construct a way to go and rescue him, and the others, from a very perilous world.”

Suddenly, Nestor was upright in the dragon’s hand, straightening out his sleeves.

“Construction, is it?” he started, suddenly serious. “Air, land, or sea?”

Figment stopped to really consider it. The miasma was semi-fluid, but airborne. It moved, but likely not from wind current. Should they constitute a guess of similarity to a cloud bank?

No, it was still able to move through vertical axes. It could go up.

“...Air. Meaning, we would need an adequately-sized vessel that accounts for aerodynamics, propulsion, control, structural capacity, *and* load—”

Nestor smiled even wider.

“Bit of a builder, are you, Figment?”

“Well!” Figment chuckled, blushing, as Diablo crept in closer. Mushu quietly slid between the avian and dragon, shaking his head. “I do assist in inventions, yes! We just came into possession of quite a few potential blueprints, as well! Granted, I...don’t do too much actual assembly...but I help on schematics and corrections, and core concept-work...long story short, I *am* capable of creating a ship, through thought! I just...am a bit of a novice, at the engineering part...”

Despite the face he was making at that idea, Nestor kept himself in check, and went with it.

“I see. Then, what dimensions are you looking for? What’s your flight envelope, relative to your current weight? We would need to change these blueprint factors, accordingly...”

Figment knew the terms. What he didn’t know was the answers.

“Heh. Alright. Who all is going on this journey, then?”

Figment, Mushu and Diablo raised their powerful arms high.

“All of you!? Well, I'm...*glad* Spyro's made friends,” Nestor added, sincerely. Figment lowered him down to the pile of schematics as Nestor politely nodded to them. “Very big friends.”

He tore through the pile, quickly eyeing each blueprint.

“Now, might I make some suggestions, given what I'm seeing?”

“Oh, o-of course!” Figment stammered, up above. “Please!”

“It sounds like time is precious, so we don't have the luxury of process. How intricate do you need your control elements to be? Are we flying, or is it just flying blind, on momentum? Comfort, how about that? Do we want a bullet, or a bird? You see, most of these are quite intricate, and would take ages to make. Give me short answers, and based on these designs, I promise...I will give you the best thing possible, for your time.”

His tiny green hands were already at his belt, his tail swishing gladly.

A true ingenium enthusiast—perhaps, a master, even. If this wasn't a boon.

Answers were given, or rather, gently culled, from whatever it was Figment thought he wanted. Within half an hour, Nestor had gathered enough desires to begin chiseling away at with reality, into a more functional format. The ship would need to house all three giants, at their current size (Figment cared less for any further size taxing, as it would have left them defenselessly small, on arrival, and if the pokeball proved anything, the effects *could* be blocked). It would need to be a bullet (given there was no time to build out a proper navigation system), and would ride on raw momentum. If they needed to move themselves, upon landing in the miasma...well, he would have to think up something, quite literally. All they really needed was to get there, intact, and untouched by the horrid stuff.

“Very good, then,” Nestor sighed, cracking his thick dragon-knuckles. “Figment, this is exactly what I want you to create, in the exact order it needs to be created. Then...we get to assembly.”

Diablo waited, pacing about, as Mushu finally noticed and began to pick arrows off of him. For roughly three hours Nestor guided, pressed, and corrected Figment's efforts, making him painstakingly shave centimeters off his creations, then lengthen, then shorten each component, piling them, moving them, rearranging their individual places, as an interior frame formed, then an exterior.

“Plastics?” Nestor balked, as Figment explained it. “A lightweight, durable material?”

“More malleable, too, in the shaping phase,” Figment added.

Both his tail and Nestor's were wagging frantically, as shop talk inevitably broke through.

“How incredible!”

Diablo glowered as he clicked his talons, somehow successfully grimacing, with a beak.

By hour four, the exterior design was roughed out into form, based off of a combination of chassis ideas from three of the best blueprints. By hour six, amazingly, a year's worth of hard work was finished. Nestor stood there by Figment's colossal foot, beaming wide at their handiwork.

“Just, lovely,” he sighed, his tail lashing about happily. “All things being considered.”

“You think it will fly, then?” Figment asked, as he looked up at the half-mile monstrosity of a design. It was more than large enough to fit all of them, a plastic oval with back and side rudders, two portholes, and an entry portal at the center side. To anyone nearby, to any unwitting traveler or passing merchant, it might as well have been some towering alien city.

“It'll fly,” Nestor confirmed, nodding confidently. “Unless you have any further business here, in this world, I imagine you're ready to test it.

“Indeed! If anything goes wrong on the test, we'll know what to fix, before going headlong into danger. If it does, I can imagine protection for us, shield us.”

“You could do that, all along, Fig?” Mushu asked, coming up close to see the ship. “Then...what's the point? Man, couldn't you jus', you know, bubble us up, and we fly in like that?”

“I could maybe, up to a point,” Figment conceded. “Any other world, with more practice, I might be able to manage it for a little while, but I'm hardly a full-on god. And, powerful or not, I'm afraid my powers would fizzle out, in this final world. We would be sitting ducks. This ship fixes that.”

“Let's be on, then,” Nestor said, having to shout up to be heard by the tower-sized titans.

“Are...you sure you're coming, too?” Figment asked, looking down over his huge chest.

“Were you going to leave me here?”

“I would have picked you back up, once we succeeded...”

“Well, thank you, but no. I'll be going in, too. Put me in your bag, if things get hairy—”

The world around the dragons tumbled into an unnatural twilight as the skies high up above suddenly ripped in two, a gash forming from far South to high North. Figment winced, looked up, and lurched back in shock.

What came through the portal wasn't a great black hand with claws ready. Whatever it was that was coming through was...pink. Dark, sickly pink.

“What in the world,” Mushu started, as a great pink muzzle and nasty teeth pushed through, parting the huge portal even wider, up above the clouds.

“Oh, good heavens,” Figment gulped. “Everyone, into the ship! We're doing the maiden voyage now! Now, now!”

“Not one of yours, Fig?” Mushu asked, as even Diablo warily made for the opening ship portal.

“Definitely not!”

“So, that bad dragoness you were talkin' 'bout, this is her!? She found us!?”

“That's not Maleficent,” Diablo indignantly grumbled as he thudded into the ship, making its hull shift with his great, bulky weight.

“He's right, that's someone else—Ludmilla!”

“YOU!”

The dragoness' booming voice tore through the stratosphere, shaking China, as a vast muzzle and angry eyes and long, curling horns pushed through.

“Everyone, in!”

Figment climbed into the massive ship last and closed the door. There was no propulsion system, it would have to run on the momentum generated, in the passing between worlds—so, that's what Figment set to. He thudded over the interior flooring, right up to the porthole, and grabbed hold of the steering wheel.

“Let's go, Fig!” Mushu hollered, as the light outside grew more and more dark, more pink.

“Right!”

He concentrated as Nestor flew up and wriggled into the bag at his bulky side. A portal formed overhead and Figment forced it to slowly, grudgingly move over them, swallowing them up steadily.

“NO, YOU DON'T!”

A hand big enough to clutch the Emperor's entire kingdom descended, blowing through little cloud banks as immense fingers curled in. The portal below swallowed the ship entirely and began to close up—only for a towering claw-tip to catch it, and begin violently forcing it open, as the monumentally huge Ludmilla forced her way out into China, then right into the new, tender portal, at the same time...

18.

“Who's Ludmilla!?”

Mushu's question lingered a moment as Figment gathered himself back up, the ship hurtling at high speed through the space between. It seemed to hold together, just fine—that was likely Figment's only positive, at the moment.

“A dragoness from yet another world,” he sighed, turning back to Mushu, who stood next to a sulking Diablo. “I thought she was imprisoned, but it looks like she went free. You see, she...well, another friend of ours...a lot of candies were involved. ”

“Kinda sorry I missed it, hehe,” Mushu offered, trying to lighten things some. “So, she chasin' us, on top of this other Maleficent dragoness, chasin' us?”

“She's...working with Maleficent,” Diablo sourly growled. The hulking raven snorted, trying not to be angry, but it was clearly building. “She smelled like her. They were together.”

“They partnered up?” Figment gasped, hating the idea too much to keep it.

“NO,” Diablo cawed, seething as quietly as he could. “NOT PARTNERS. I'M HER PARTNER, NOT SOME STINKING OTHER LIZARD.”

“Right, sorry,” Figment soothed, huge hands up. “Didn't mean it like that. Silly me.”

“Well, we got away, it's all good,” Mushu added. “So, where we headin'?”

“I wanted to try another world,” Figment began. “But the last time I wound up there, it was within a strange sub-world, and I worry about trying to go back, for the same result. So, I'm heading to another world, instead, a friendly one.”

“The ship seems to be bearing the test well, so far,” Nestor said, peeking up from the top flap of Figment's bag. “It's solid work, for short notice!”

“Thanks to you, Nestor!” Figment added, grinning down.

“So, that big bag of mean back there was jus' a lackey for this Maleficent,” Mushu said, thinking aloud. “An' even she bigger than all of us, by a landslide. How we gonna beat that, Fig? You said all the candies were gone, right?”

“Ooh, yes. Yes, that's true,” Figment hummed, biting his lip again. “We lost the last bits, in another world. I could simply *imagine* us all to a better, bigger size, if we needed to be...I just don't quite know how much power that would take.”

“What if we got split up, though?” he countered. “I mean, no offense, but it sounds like y'all get split up a lot. How you gonna grow me proper, when we ain't together?”

Figment opened his mouth, then closed it. Yet another problem.

“What I'm gettin' at, Fig, is...we need candies. Right? Well, can't you jus' make some more?”

Figment's eyes nearly bulged out of his skull. A wave of hot embarrassment slipped down through his bulky body, nearly consuming it with a darkening blush. Had something that wild eluded him that long? Really?

“Well, I...” he fumbled, gulping. “I do suppose...”

“Yes,” Diablo seconded, the huge bird turning to face them. “Yes, he's right. Make us candies! Big, BIG ones. I will crush Ludmilla, myself! Tower over her stupid height!”

“Yeah, see? He could show Maleficent he's still got it—” Mushu started, making the raven tremble with sudden excitement. Figment motioned for him to, perhaps, not pursue the idea so hard.

“YES!” Diablo roared, nodding rapidly.

“Okay, let's simmer our soup a bit,” Figment coughed, pulling things back. “I can try, while we're en route. After all, I don't think I'll be able to create anything, once we get to Maleficent's realm, so...yes, I suppose now is the only time to try it...”

“Make me a super-duper candy, Fig, c'mon,” Mushu said, his eyes gleaming with a pleasantly understandable greed. Even at their most noble, dragons *were* dragons. “Like, a million times stronger! No, no, a billion! Yeah!”

“YES!” Diablo concurred, the god-bird's feathers bristling out happily.

“I'll see what I can manage,” Figment offered, clearing his throat. “But, we're starting small...”

He opened both supinated palms, closed his eyes, and thought hard. He thought of a humble candy—a regular blue one, like before. With surprising speed, one did indeed pop into being, landing with a tiny thump on his massive palm. He opened his eyes, and smiled. Mushu and Diablo saw his palms, and frowned.

“It's kinda tiny, ain't it, Fig?”

“Not for him, it isn't,” Figment replied, letting Nestor catch it as it rolled down to him, in the rim of the bag. He caught it, wide-eyed, then looked up. It was a bit too big for him, still.

“Candy, you say?” Nestor wondered, looking the ball-sized thing over.

“Eat it, go on,” Figment gently ordered, waiting.

Nestor looked at each of the towering giants, then shrugged and made to bite when the ship jerked to the right, throwing them all into a series of reptilian roars and a very unhappy squawk. It righted itself, then pitched left as some pressure or force buffeted against the hull, from outside. A porthole in the far back told a grim story.

“Ludmilla!” Figment shouted, as the image of a great, opened maw bore closer, behind them, all malice and teeth. “She forced her way in, after us!”

Even though the space between taxed her thoroughly, Ludmilla still loomed large at 40 miles tall, more than big enough to outsize the ship and its passengers. Where she had previously loomed as big as a continent, she had now dwindled down to roughly the size of a city. To something that was barely a small town, in comparison, that remained bad news.

“She's gainin', man!” Mushu wailed as the monstrous dragoness bore down on them, her vast breasts getting close enough to bulge underneath the ship as her mouth opened wider, readying to swallow them whole. “Can't we do anything!?”

“We didn't build for combat!” Figment hollered as he spun the steering wheel and banked hard left, narrowly avoiding Ludmilla's huge jaws as they snapped. “Our only option is surviving, until we clear the other side of the portal!”

“When'll that be!?”

“Any minute—”

“Can't you just open one up, now!?”

“A portal attempt, *during* portal travel? I...I don't know! I don't know how that would fare!”

Happily enough, before they could spitball their doom scenarios, the rush of energy and light slipped away, and a lovely evening sky rushed over as they careened through it. The porthole was lavender clouds snuggled in the bosom of orange glow; the next, it was the ground, and the ground was a lot happier to see them than the clouds.

What could he do, what could he do? *Give the ship wings! A parachute?* Given how tricky pure focus was, while they free-fell to their deaths, nothing seemed to come of his panicked thoughts.

“Oh!” Figment yelped, reflexively holding the wheel tight. “HANG ON—”

To his and everyone's mutual shock, the ship didn't land, so much as it *bounced*. In one arc, it thumped again, then came to a rather gentle rest, in place. Figment opened his eyes back up, peered out the porthole, and gasped.

“Hey, alright, Fig!” Mushu whooped, laughing. “Smooth landin’!”

“It...wasn't me, frankly,” Figment chuckled weakly, pointing out the porthole.

Diablo and Mushu came nearer, looked, then wore about the same confusion as Figment. The sky had been completely replaced by green—and that green was moving. The entire ship rose and fell as a deep, warm *rumble* followed, tremoring through. It certainly wasn't grass.

“Wait,” Figment sighed, forcing his hands to release from their vice-grip on the wheel. He went over to the exit, opened it up, and stepped out—onto a smooth, massive scale. “Oh, heavens, it...it is...it must be! Haha!”

The others peered out after, looking about, and went slack-jawed.

“MY GOODNESS GRACIOUS,” a tremendous, heavy, singsong voice blasted, shaking them all from up above. “SUCH BIG BUGS WE'RE HAVING, THIS SEASON, MY!”

“Hello, up there!” Figment cheered, waving all about, down on the oversized chest of the Reluctant Dragon. “It's Figment! Hello, I say!”

Figment was hundreds of feet in size, and even he was indeed a bug, compared to him. The Reluctant Dragon sat on the countryside, literally, his huge round belly dimpling as it rested over mountain ranges and valleys, his feet rising higher than any beanstalk ever could dare. Each scale was practically a city in itself, clinging to his tear-drop belly, easily over 100 miles tall. Clouds nuzzled affectionately around his smooth belly as he blinked, squinted hard, then broke into a delighted laugh that shook everything for miles, beyond.

“MY! WHY, FIGMENT, IT'S YOU! HELLO! HELLO, HELLO, YES!”

Eyes big enough to swallow the horizon settled excitedly on him, the edges of a vast grin curling up on either side of the periphery.

“You know this guy, Fig?” Mushu checked, staring up in awe.

“Don't you? It's the dragon you and Spyro and Cynder and I all met before!”

Mushu went pale.

“That's him!? H...how'd he get so supreme!? Why ain't I that big!?”

“Good question,” Figment hummed.

“OH, BUT IT'S SUCH A RELIEF TO SEE YOU!” the dragon boom-boomed, clapping hands big enough to hold a kingdom as shock waves burst out. “WHY, IT'S BEEN DREADFULLY DULL, BEING AT SUCH A STATURE, JUST A *DREADFUL* BORE! THERE'S NO ONE TO SERVE LUNCH, NO WAY TO HEAR APPLAUSE FOR POETRY, AT ALL. OH! HEAVENS, NO!”

At that, the dragon's colossal body rumbled fresh and deep, making Reluctant lid his eyes and grit his teeth cutely as another huge burst of growth blew up inside him. His scales stretched angrily as he groaned, ballooning to even greater scope; his belly sagged heavier as it inflated over the ranges, clearing the mountain borders of his seat. His tail pushed bigger and fatter through the coast and into the ocean, his growing toes curling as his heels dug through the topside of the continent.

“G...GUH-GOODNESSSS...”

His gentle voice swelled deeper as he pumped 20 miles larger, then 20 more, expanding again by half, in mere seconds. His head punched up higher into the skies, his belly and neck scales expanding smoothly underneath the ship, beneath the feet of Figment, Mushu and Diablo.

“Make me big, like that!” Diablo ordered, poking Figment angrily, yet happily.

“This isn't from me!” Figment countered, as the quakes and tremors of the dragon's growth finally receded, leaving him an incredible 220 miles tall, *sitting down*.

The earth moaned unhappily against such catastrophic weight, but held.

“YET AGAIN, I'M SWELLING AND BULGING HIGHER,” the dragon sighed, shaking his now-titanic head with a booming symphony of *tsks*. “THIS REALLY WILL NOT DO. YOU SEE, MY DEAR FIGMENT? I MUST BE A SIGHT!”

“And how,” Mushu said, still staring. “Should I even tell him I'm here?”

“If you aren't going to make me that big,” Diablo cut in, tapping a huge claw on Reluctant's scale, “we should go. Why are we still here? We escaped, we should go to Maleficent!”

“You're right,” Figment admitted, making Diablo swell a bit with satisfaction. “There was a bit

of a chase there, but the test worked, the ship is operable. We need to go!”

“What if she keeps on chasin' us, though?” Mushu asked. “She gonna just bust into this world too, right?”

“Right, she likely will.”

Figment turned to the looming face of the Reluctant Dragon, rendered a monument of effeminate chagrin.

“It's good to see you, just the same!” Figment shouted up, wagging. “Have you been growing ever since we left here?”

“WELL, NO, NOT RIGHT AWAY,” Reluctant sighed, thinking. “IT TOOK A FEW DAYS, BEFORE I STARTED RUMBLING UP BIGGER...ALL I DID WAS HAVE SOME TEA, AFTER FINDING A BIGGER CAVE TO TAKE RESIDENCE IN...”

“Well...was it the same pot you made that tea for us with?”

“CERTAINLY, MY BOY! FAMILY HEIRLOOM, YOU KNOW.”

“And, did you clean it out first? Or were there still traces of the growth tea left?”

“WELL, NATURALLY, I...OH, HEAVENS, I DON'T KNOW THAT I DID...OH...OHOHO! BY MY SCALES, YOU KNOW, I...HOW DREADFULLY SILLY OF ME!”

Figment turned to Diablo and Mushu, then looked down at Nestor, who remained up over the rim of the bag, the tiny blue candy still in hand.

“Alright, this is perfect,” Figment said, grinning lopsidedly. “We only need to make one modification on the ship, then we go straight to Maleficent. No need to tarry, now that we know it works. Nestor, would you please take a bite or two of that candy? Better to have you up to size.”

Not bothering to ask nor argue, the tinier green dragon obliged. With one good bite of candy, the carpenter dragon shook, then rattled, then closed his eyes as he ballooned bigger, and bigger, and bigger. The bag sagged against his growing weight as his already-healthy physique swelled out, his green arms stretching thicker, his proud chest pushing wider, his neck thickening just enough to keep up, as he bulged to fill the entire bag.

Figment helped him out as Nestor grew to a comparative child, then a teenager. By the time he was set down, he stood nearly half Figment's towering height.

“That should more or less do, Nestor, thank you!” Figment chirped. “We don't want to fuss about with changing the size of the ship, if we can all just stay in the same range, and get in quickly. Now, can you tell me where a propulsion system would best go? We can't just go full-bullet, if we end up being chased again, we need to maneuver on our own.”

“FIGMENT, DEAR, WHO *ARE* YOU SPEAKING TO, DOWN THERE?”

The dragon's great shadow swelled down over them all, as Figment chuckled.

“Just some other comrades, heh. Could you do us a rather massive favor?”

“OH, CERTAINLY SO, FIGMENT, YOU KNOW I WOULD HELP YOU, ANY DAY!”

“Well—”

Once again, the sky darkened, unnaturally so. Figment winced as a bright gash of energy slit across the heavens, above, and that same pink hand started to force it wider apart.

“Ah, well,” Figment stammered, double-timing. “We're trying to go save Spyro and Cynder, you remember them!”

“WELL, OF COURSE I—GRACIOUS ME, MARGARET, WHAT IS THAT, UP THERE!?”

“We need to go to their world, to settle everything, but we're being chased by this other nasty dragoness! Could you please occupy her? Calm her down, with some tea and poetry, perhaps?”

“OH! WELL, I DO HAVE SEVERAL NEW VERSES, AND I HARDLY HATE THEM...”

The sky cracked wide as Ludmilla's immense muzzle and breasts pushed into their world, her taxed-down body closer to maybe 5 miles in size.

“You'll want them at the four corners, Figment,” Nestor said, briskly, now just a head under the purple dragon's size. “There, and there, both sides. I recommend air currents or steam for your actual propulsion! Make exactly what I tell you!”

“R-right!”

As Ludmilla crammed her bulging scales free, her eyes settled on them, far below.

“YOU MISERABLE WHELPS! TO THINK, MALEFICENT EVEN WANTS TO BOTHER WITH YOU ALL! I...SHOULD CRUSH YOU TO DUST, INSTEAD! JUST LET HER BE MAD ABOUT IT! IT'D BE A PERFECT EXCUSE, TO DEFEAT HER IN COMBAT, AND TAKE OVER!”

“I don't think she playin', Fig!” Mushu gulped, backing away.

Figment focused, and four large divots dug into the corners of the ship's hull, before a large exhaust pod formed, to fill each one. Nestor rattled off far more interior components than Figment was expecting, but he kept up with every detail—even as Ludmilla popped free, and dropped down through the air, descending like a doomsday meteor.

“I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT YOU GET, FOR TRYING TO IMPRISON ME! THAT OLD CRONE GOT WHAT WAS COMING TO HER! AND NOW, YOU'LL ALL WHAT IS THAT—”

Gigantic green palms slammed in from the East and West as the Reluctant Dragon easily snatched Ludmilla out of the sky, holding the towering reptile like a mere toy.

“SUCH A FUSS!” the Reluctant Dragon said, shushing. Despite being so very-much bigger than her, his gentle nature gave him the softer voice. “I MEAN, REALLY!”

“L...LET GO!” Ludmilla boomed, thrashing her bulk about, whipping her head in anger. Compared to him, her roars were more cute than terrifying. “YOU HEAR!? LET ME GO!”

“I RATHER THINK I SHAN'T,” he huffed, only glowering when she bit ineffectually at his gripping hands. “NOW, REALLY! BEHAVE YOURSELF!”

“Alright, Figment, that should do it!” Nestor said, thumping him on the back muscles with an open palm. “We're good to go!”

“Wonderful, you're wonderful,” Figment sighed, putting a huge hand on Nestor's nearly-mutually-huge shoulder. “Let's be off, everyone! Time to end this!”

The others climbed aboard as Figment knelt in, and hugged what little he could of the Reluctant Dragon's huge chest, tightly.

“Thank you terribly, up there! So good to see you again! I promise, I'll return you to your proper size, once this is over, okay?”

“MY BOY, YOU'RE TERRIBLY WELCOME!” the dragon laughed, winking down at him from so very high up. “I *SHOULD* LIKE TO APOLOGIZE TO THE HUMANS, YES. LORD KNOWS WHAT THEY'VE BEEN PUTTING UP WITH, DOWN THERE.”

“I imagine they're all quite fine, my friend!” Figment said, making absolute sure that would hold fast, in this world. “No one is hurt, I assure you!”

“OH, THAT IS A RELIEF! WELL, THEN, OFF WITH YOU, DEAR! TELL SPYRO AND CYNDER HELLO! YOU MUST COME BACK FOR LUNCH, I INSIST! IF YOU DON'T, WHY, I'LL JUST GROW SO BIG, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY...”

“**SHUT...UP!**” Ludmilla bellowed, only to feel it as Reluctant trembled all over, grit his teeth, and started to swell even more monstrously vast, his stretching filling the hemisphere.

“R-right, then!” Figment yelled, climbing into the altered ship, and slamming the door shut.

The ship's propulsion system flared to life as jets of steam burst out from the vents, until the ship rose higher and higher up off of the dragon's swelling scales. They almost found themselves turf-bound again, a moment, as his booming belly and chest roared up to catch them, the titanic dragon quaking and grunting as he bloated up to 250 miles...300 miles...400 miles...his rump smothered the country, the coast, the lakes, the mountains, the skies, on and on, Ludmilla growling and writhing as she sank completely in between his growing palms.

“Hope that he'll be alright,” Nestor said as Figment took the wheel, and steered away from the ever-rising belly in the distance. “He seems a good sort.”

“Oh, very,” Figment chuckled, surprised at just how lifted he was, seeing another friend. “I'd worry more about Ludmilla, at the rate he's expanding. *For* her, rather.”

“Let's go,” Diablo barked, his huge arms folded again. “No more playing around!”

“Science is as much patience, as it is pushing,” Figment replied, as Mushu busied himself with blowing great volleys of flame into a new-formed furnace at the back, over and over.

“Easy...for y'all t...to say,” he huffed, his huge chest swelling out as he blew more fire in, supplying vital steam to the system and pods.

Diablo was correct. All the most necessary tests were as done as could be. There was no other preparation, no other task. All there was, at long last, was Maleficent. The thrill of it butted against the lingering terror he felt, but Figment bullied through as he opened the last portal, saw it swirling with endless darkness and nightmares...and sailed the ship straight into it.

19.

Darkness. That was it, that was everything.

Not night time, with its cool comforts and warmed hearths, or brilliant stars. Just an ocean of living, surging ink—and it knew they were there, a host glaring at one invading microbe. Figment knew, the way prey knows when the eyes of its own doom are upon it.

Even Figment had never in his strange, magical life, conceived of any shade of black this horrendous, this deep. Even the modest glow of the interior light withered slowly, dropping whole tones as they forced their way into the blighted corruption of Maleficent's home.

“It...is *unpleasant*,” Nestor murmured, an edge of some long-forgotten dread cutting through. “Do you have any idea just what this is?”

“I wish I could say,” Figment started, trembling all over, unable to stop. “About as much as I wish I never find out.”

Somehow, impossibly, it felt worse than before, when he had been running for his life.

“Where we...headin' to, F-Fig?” Mushu sputtered, stopping his fire-breathing for a moment to catch his breath. “Tell me...it's close...”

“She's near,” Diablo said, plainly, seeming unconcerned with the wailing annihilation, outside.

“All we need to do is make our way into a structure, somewhere safe enough to disembark,” Figment said, trying to push the exploding panic out of his mind. “I can't do much in this place, so we need our own wits to survive.”

“You...were here before?” Nestor balked. “You made it out?”

“...Barely, yes.”

A note of silent respect filled the ship, as Nestor let the concept in.

“Wits, *and* candy,” Mushu added, before blowing flame into the furnace again.

“Yes, candy,” Diablo compounded, nodding rapidly. “You’ll make me colossal, so that Maleficent will see my glory, and take me back. That was the deal!”

“The deal was—”

“THAT WAS THE DEAL!”

Figment rubbed his eyes over, tired. He motioned for Nestor to please take the wheel, then turned and opened the bag up.

“Right, here we go...”

One by one, larger candies began to pop into it, slowly. It took a surprising amount of focus, just to make a small handful of them, regardless of which color or color combination he considered trying. They were all about equally tricky to make. Diablo pushed nearer, reaching with greedy hands, but Figment swatted them back.

“GIVE!” the raven boomed, glaring darkly.

“Not yet! We don’t want to outgrow the ship!”

“You don’t! I couldn’t care less! I’ll find Maleficent—”

“If you explode the ship with your spurts, we’ll all tumble into the nightmare! You, too! Is your nightmare to never see her again? Because, that’s what will happen! You’ll be a puny featherless bird, and she’ll laugh at you, from high up in the darkness!”

That did it. For once, at long last, Diablo shut up. He recoiled back so fast that he nearly crashed into Mushu. Rotten as the bird was, deep-down, that microscopic flash of vulnerability and fear left Figment feeling sorry for him, once more.

“W...when we get there, then,” Diablo corrected, looking anxiously away. “Make me *extra* big-big. D-deal. Deal!”

He hadn’t quite meant to jump that far, to keep Diablo in check. An edge was forming, but that much was inevitable, given the scene; all he could do was silently apologize as the interior light spluttered lower, still, the ship rocking and pitching against the eldritch mass around them.

Only four candies had successfully formed, when the ship found something—*face first*.

No one had a chance to say anything or cry out as something shattered, outside, then let them push into clear air. A blinding flash followed, then faded, leaving Nestor to steer blind as the ship spun

and jetted steam, trying to correct itself in mid-air.

The crash was hardly spectacular, but it was enough to make the list.

“Is everyone alright?” Figment asked, getting back up onto his feet. Diablo was upside down, and even less happy than before. Nestor peeled himself off a wall, and nodded.

“Guess we're here,” Mushu grumbled, picking himself up. “How we doin' this, Fig?”

“Well...first, we get a lay of the land, then find the others and free them. I don't want any trouble with Maleficent, before then, this is a sneaking mission!”

Diablo was already reaching for the door.

“That means you, too,” Figment ordered, firmly, getting in between the hulking bird and the ship exit. “No giving us up to Maleficent, understand? You can rejoin her fair and square, after we get our friends out. Then, I'll give you an extra-strong candy. I hope we don't have to fight, when it comes to it, because I don't think you're that bad of a fellow...”

“I want the strongest candy you made,” Diablo growled, narrowing his eyes to yellow slits. “Then, you'll regret it! Maybe I won't crush you, but I will bat you all away like insects!”

Was it a noble trait, being that evilly honest?

“As long as we can save Spyro, that's a start,” Nestor said, steeling himself.

“Yeah, and we'll just see who towers over who, when it comes to it,” Mushu huffed, flexing. “Let's get goin, Fig, and bust everyone out! I...I mean, you *know* she got 'em, right?”

“We'll find out,” Figment sighed. There was no point in lying. “Out we go!”

The door swung open, and out they all stepped.

A great oaken plain stretched out for miles, so large and wide across that every ridge, every divot in the grain was a slope, some even canyons. Through a faraway haze of atmosphere they could see enormous spans of blood-red velvet curtains punctuating towering marble pillars. Far, far above, vast rafters consumed a sky of stonework and mortar, a massive circle of iron set with Sun-sized lights. Diablo's wings readied to flap open for flight, but the bird stopped himself and behaved.

“A castle,” Nestor hummed, circling around in place. “Fantastic...”

“It's not nothin',” Mushu mumbled, before looking away, and thumping Figment's bulky shoulder with his hand. “Hey-hey, Fig, look there! Hah! Gonna be a short mission!”

Indeed, the ship's nose had crashed into a large glass sphere, atop the same gigantic table as it. A small hole had been smashed into the center-side, the ship embedded partially within—and something inside was moving. It hopped up and down, arms swaying, a look of both panic and absolute elation on its purple muzzle.

“Haha!” Figment cheered, before stopping himself with a wince. He looked around, then leaned nearer to the other crew, to whisper: “Spyro! He's right there!”

Spyro circled around in his orb then thumped excitedly against it with both powerful arms, beaming wide. As Figment and company approached his opaque features dropped. Figment understood why his comrade was making more of a sour face, as Diablo approached, right up behind him.

Spyro pointed at the bird and shrugged way up, his muscles stretching from the effort.

Figment nodded, then motioned to Diablo, and shrugged back, shaking his head.

Diablo didn't care.

Spyro covered his muzzle, let his mitts slip back off, then pointed away from them all, down at several other orbs. Figment nearly cried out again, seeing Cynder in the next one, Toothless in the one by her, and a larger Bartok stuffed into the last. Beyond them were entire planets and stars, all plundered from regular-sized space, held captive in floating spheres. Had she stolen them, herself?

“Man, we're good,” Mushu chuckled, folding his massive red arms. “Found 'em, already!”

Spyro saw Mushu and beamed, drumming on his prison happily, and Mushu waved back, all smiles. As they both put hands on either side in silent greeting, Figment busied himself with getting the other dragons' attention. Cynder reacted the same, while Toothless casually stretched and waved back, looking like he'd just woken up. Bartok was too big to move around much, but the mighty bat-dragon smiled and tried to move his huge arms enough to manage a wave.

WE'LL GET YOU OUT, HOLD ON, Figment mouthed, jogging back over the ridges of wood grain to talk with the others.

“I think I can portal them all out, one-by-one! It shouldn't tax them very much if it's between two short points, in the same world. It worked for me, when I went into Diablo and warped back out.”

“If you're sure, Figment, then by all means,” Nestor said, stepping back.

“Do it, Fig, you got this,” Mushu seconded, also stepping back (even further).

“Hurry up,” Diablo sneered, which as a bird was difficult to do.

Figment nodded, rubbing his hands together. He could do this, absolutely. Being bigger than a building meant a lot less, in a realm that made even them seem speck-sized...but, he was strong. Getting stronger every minute. The dragon marshaled every scrap of confidence and turned to the row of prison-orbs, concentrating.

That was when all four of them simply vanished, within each one.

“Dang, all four at once?” Mushu whistled, quietly. “Good goin’!”

“Ah,” Figment gulped, opening his eyes back up. “T-that wasn't me...”

“CORRECT.”

Figment tensed in so tight as to nearly shrink.

He turned away from the orbs and ship and saw a terrible, awesome sight: a nearly-black dragoness, dark-purple plates hugging her belly and enormous breasts, her thick hips bulging out on either side. Two cruel horns curved back from her towering head and muzzle, a sinister, cosmic glow emanating from flaring nostrils. An immense sash of dark gold glimmered and sparkled as she bore it like some empress of old as she thudded nearer, taking up all of the periphery with her belly.

“Maleficent!” Figment gasped, taking full stock of her as she loomed high.

“I OWE YOU SOMETHING OF AN APOLOGY, PET,” the dark dragoness boomed, coyly smirking down over the cliffs of her bust. **“TO THINK! YOU, OF ALL TYPES, MANAGING TO NOT ONLY TRAP ME...BUT EVEN ESCAPE MY OWN TRAP, LATER ON! BUT, YOU ARE A CLEVER THING, CLEARLY. I TRIED TO HOLD YOU IN THE ACADEMY, WITH THAT...UNHAPPY THING...YET, YOU FOUND A WAY OUT. I SURROUNDED THIS WORLD WITH MORE AND MORE NIGHTMARES, AND YOU FOUND A WAY THROUGH. I COULD ALMOST ADMIRE YOU...FIGMENT!”**

This no longer being a stealth mission, Figment rumbled all over and swelled larger and larger, his feet ballooning into the others as he grew and grew and grew, until he took up a whole quarter-foot of the table. He was roughly as tall as the row of orbs had been, across, give or take. At that point, suddenly, his imagination gave out and his spurt slowed, making him nothing more than a *slightly-larger* fly, compared to her.

“Er,” Figment grunted, trying to imagine himself bigger. All the while Diablo flapped and fussed in place, too small to be seen, or even heard by his Master.

“HAVING TROUBLE GROWING?” Maleficent asked, cocking a head so large that it could be heard moving, up above. **“I SUPPOSE THIS REALM IS A BIT MORE CHALLENGING TO WORK IN. IT CERTAINLY WAS, WHEN I BEGAN TRYING MY OWN HAND AT IMAGINING.”**

“T-that can't be right,” Figment stammered, as the others hid behind him. “I...”

“YOU, WHAT? I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, I LEARNED FIRST-HAND. VERY INTERESTING, INDEED. DID YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT WORLD IT WAS YOU TRAPPED ME IN, BACK THEN? HAS IT BEEN A FEW DAYS FOR YOU, SINCE OUR ENCOUNTER? WEEKS? IT'S BEEN YEARS TO ME. YEARS!”

The entire castle shook as a tremendous burst of power blasted off her body.

“AT FIRST, THERE WAS NOTHING BUT WASTELAND. I WANDERED, UNTIL YOU SENT ANOTHER DRAGON THROUGH. I FED OFF OF HER, CONTINUING ON, UNTIL I FOUND CIVILIZATION. A STRANGE, MODERN KIND, THAT SHAMED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MY OWN TIME. YET, NO ONE WAS THERE. NO BUILDING WAS INHABITED. A WORLD, EMPTY AND ABANDONED. ONLY ONE PLACE STOOD PROUD, AS THOUGH CAREFULLY PRESERVED BY LOVING HANDS. YOU WOUND UP THERE,

YOURSELF.”

Figment's blood ran so cold, no amount of imagining could warm it.

“T...the Academy!”

“YOUR HOME, YES. SOMETHING HAPPENED IN THIS WORLD, VERY SIMILAR TO YOUR SITUATION. I WAS TOLD ALL ABOUT IT.”

“B...but, you said...this world was empty...”

Maleficent let Figment flounder, delighted with herself, as a stray surge of power blew her up even taller, her horns nearing the ceiling. So much power flowed through her scaly bulk that it could be seen coming and going, ebbing and receding in tics and waves under her hide.

“AND WHOM, THEN, COULD HAVE TOLD ME? WELL. I COULD TELL YOU, BUT THAT WOULD TAKE UP FURTHER TIME, AND I AM QUITE BUSY. NO, I ONLY CAME TO CONGRATULATE YOU. YOU SEE, I HAVE BEEN STEADILY ABSORBING UNBELIEVABLE OCEANS OF POWER FROM SOMEONE SPECIAL, AND I NEED ONLY A LITTLE MORE...BEFORE I CAN CONTROL EVERYTHING. EVEN THAT MIASMA, OUTSIDE OF THIS SHELTER I'VE CONSTRUCTED FOR MYSELF. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MANY NIGHTMARES HAD FORMED, BY THE TIME I FINISHED BUILDING IT. HOW THEY HAVE MULTIPLIED, AS OUR SESSIONS HAVE GONE ON!”

“Wait! Explain yourself! Who told you? What happened to this world? A-are you really making everything here bigger, with you, to keep inside? Even the planet on which the castle rests? I mean...surely, you would *have* to...”

“HMPH. I CANNOT TARRY HERE, TO EXPLAIN. IF I WISH TO MAINTAIN THIS CASTLE WITHOUT BURSTING THROUGH IT, I MUST TAKE MORE POWER IN, GAIN MORE CONTROL OF MYSELF, OF EVERYTHING. THE MOMENT I HAVE TOTAL POWER, THOUGH...I SHALL OVERFLOW SO BIG, SO HUGE, THAT A NATION OF NIGHTMARES COULDN'T HOPE TO STOP ME! I SHALL HAVE MY OWN ESCAPE...EVEN IF IT MEANS OUTGROWING THIS UNIVERSE, TO DO IT! AND THE NEXT, AND THE NEXT! COMBINED WITH HIS POWER, I WOULD OVERTAKE EXISTENCE, IN A SECOND!”

Had she really been keeping herself prisoner, in this castle? *'Him'*? Figment's mind put as much together as it possibly could manage:

She can't outgrow the castle she learned to create, because she would be swallowed by nightmares...meaning, she's learned to create raw material, the same way I have...but the nightmares aren't her doing. Something happened, long before she and I arrived. But, I talked to Blarion, during my entrapment! He was there, wasn't he? Where was this world's Figment, then?

“DO ENJOY YOURSELVES,” Maleficent bellowed, smoothly thudding off and away. **“I DOUBT YOU COULD INTERFERE MUCH, SINCE MY WILL IS SMOTHERING YOUR OWN, BUT JUST TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED...”**

She snapped two massive clawed fingers, and four portals opened wide farther down the

endless hallway. Out stepped Spyro, Cynder, Toothless and Bartok, all of them blown up to the size of the immense table, muscles heaving, eyes glowing a dark and awful emerald mist.

“I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOUR BELOVED ASSOCIATES, SHOULD YOU SOMEHOW MUSTER UP THE KILLER INSTINCT. GOOD LUCK, FIGMENT.”

Figment backed away as Mushu and a worn-out Diablo stepped aside. Nestor remained by the tiny ship, watching, agog at what a behemoth Spyro had swollen into.

“They don't look so glad to see us,” Mushu said, hiding behind Figment's massive ankle, looking out to the horizon at the end of the table, which the possessed dragons filled.

“No,” Figment snorted, closing his eyes. He pushed all the lingering questions out.

“Well, what're we gonna do? Should I take Spyro, or you?”

“NO.”

The four dragons all advanced, huge paws thumping the stone and rug below. Figment grit his teeth and wrinkled his muzzle, focusing even more.

“NO.”

Just like that, rather abruptly, the foul mists cleared; Spyro's eyes fluttered bright and kind, followed by Cynder's, Toothless's, and Bartok's.

“HO, WHAT TH' HECK, THERE,” Bartok huffed, blinking, looking back at the others. “WHAT WAS ALL THAT, JUS' NOW?”

“UGH,” Spyro boomed, moaning, bringing a paw up to his head. “FEELS LIKE MY MIND NEEDS A SHOWER...”

“Figment!” Cynder gasped, looking the hall over. “Figment, WHERE ARE YOU?”

“HI, FIG!” Toothless laughed, the thick, bulging dragon waving a powerful arm at the table.

“How...” Mushu began, cocking his head in wonder, down on the tabletop. “Did you just *nuh-uh* her mind control, Fig? Man, that was awesome! Hah!”

Figment exhaled heavily and smirked down at him, wagging.

“Guess she doesn't have total control, after all,” he chuckled, as a series of thumps swelled into a storm of falling feet. He looked up to see the overhead view consumed by his friends, who all gathered in tight, smiling down at him.

“THAT HAD TO HAVE BEEN YOU, FIG!” Spyro laughed, wagging all about. “WAY TO GO, WITH THE QUICK FIX! HAHA!”

Cynder muscled in against Spyro, her muzzle looming over the smaller crew.

“FIG, CAN YOU GET YOURSELF UP TO OUR SIZE? WE NEED TO STOP MALEFICENT, RIGHT AWAY! WE WERE HERE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE HER GETTING STRONGER, SHE'S ALREADY OVERPOWERED BEYOND BELIEF!”

Figment took a breath, then rumbled again, and began to inflate up bigger and bigger, once more. Mushu yelped and clung to Figment's swelling ankle as the purple dragon flexed and bulged bigger, thicker, taller. His feet surged hotly over creaking wood as he overtook a portion of the table, rising up past the others' huge muzzles, and by the time they all backed off Figment was easily as bulky, tall and proud as they were.

The group hug was instantaneous, long, and deep. A herd of muzzles slipped and rubbed by as everyone nuzzled in, laughing and clucking and sniffing, before Figment swelled even bigger, his bloated muscles stretching powerfully and forcing their grips apart.

“Better!” Figment chirped, giving every one of them an even bigger hug.

“How'd you find us, Fig?” Spyro asked, when Bartok pushed in.

“Geez, Fig, I'm sorry—when we arrived, I got hit by that nasty ocean-a' nightmares, and I panicked, an' I kinda opened the ball, tryin' to get inside to safety, with you all...but that just let it in! Next thing I knew, we were all captured, 'cept you. I guess Maleficent put you somewhere worse...”

“Quite alright, Bartok, I...I u-understand,” Figment soothed, grinning sadly. “I had my own taste, I can't blame you one bit for it.”

“Big deal, anyhow,” Toothless chuffed, shrugging his huge shoulders. “We're all here!”

That was enough to remind Figment.

“Oh, one second—”

He slid off the table to join the others, then focused. Mushu blew up into view, heaving larger in messy, hot spurts, until he was taller than any of them, laden with straining bulk. His ears perked up as he looked himself over, felt his swollen chest, then beamed.

“Hey, alright! That's more like it!”

“Mushu!” Spyro nearly blasted, hugging him tight. “You joined this whole mess!?”

“Like I was gon' leave y'all twistin'!” he laughed, elbowing Spyro's brawny scales. “Figment came and got me, man, we bustin' y'all out! No more split-ups, no more detours! We together!”

Diablo rumbled up bigger, and bigger, until he swelled over the table, making Spyro and Cynder recoil, as Mushu watched.

“What's *he* doing here!?” Cynder asked first.

“He was going to wreak havoc, back in the fairies' world,” Figment sighed. “I had to bargain, to

get him to come with me, and leave them in peace.”

“But how'd he even get free—”

“Ripto.”

“Oh,” both dragons snorted, disdainfully.

“He'll behave, I promise,” Figment said, more to Diablo than anyone. The bird grumbled to himself, his bulging arms folded grudgingly.

“She didn't even notice me,” the raven muttered, looking down at the floor. “They're all free, now, lizard, give me the candy you said you would! Deal! Then, I go back and impress her!”

“A deal's a deal, I suppose,” Figment admitted, fishing out a candy from the bag, and offering it to the raven, who greedily took it. “Just, wait a minute before taking it, okay, Diablo? Please.”

“No more deals,” the gigantic avian growled.

“Guess y'all all have a history, goin’,” Mushu said, hanging back.

“News to me, there,” Bartok offered. “Good t'meecha, Bartok.”

“Mushu, how it is. Hey, any friend of Fig's!”

“That there's Toothless,” Bartok added, as Toothless smiled, all teeth.

“No, he ain't.”

“We can hold off on the introductions, guys, it's time for—”

A massive green hand slapped Spyro's back, interrupting, making him turn and nearly cry out.

“N...no way!”

Nestor continued inflating larger, and larger, his bulk stretching as he blew up into view. Being new to the experience, a massive, awkward smile stuck to his muzzle, his eyes fluttering slightly from the afterglow of such a mammoth growth spurt.

“G...good to see you, Spyro!”

“He followed us,” Figment laughed, as Nestor made to shake Spyro's hand. Spyro broke in and hugged him tight, holding it there. “We couldn't have built the ship that crashed here, without him.”

“I never thought I'd hug you, at equal size,” Spyro hummed, making Nestor darken into an embarrassed shade of blush. “Heck, I never thought I'd *see* you again!”

“It's good...to see you, yes,” Nestor repeated, not so much hugging back, but not stopping the younger dragon, either. “I'm glad you're alright! You must have been on quite a journey!”

“Oh, you wouldn't believe,” Spyro answered, nodding over to Figment. “Just ask my brother, here, he'll tell you. Right, Fig, we got one last dragon to clobber! How do you wanna do this?”

Figment's lip pursed high up at being called that by him. Blarion was his only family, and had always been. He swallowed it down, however, and pressed on.

“We've got one more foe to put down, everyone,” he said, reclaiming his authority. “Somehow, Maleficent has learned a power I thought only I had, and that makes her incredibly dangerous. If it comes down to a matter of willpower, then I want you all to hang back, to try and stay out of her range...whatever it might be. I don't know how well I can protect you all, with my own power!”

Diablo shoved past the lot of them and headed down the same flight of stairs Maleficent had descended moments earlier.

“Talk, talk.”

“We stay close, no matter what,” Cynder replied, a clawed hand on Figment's shoulder. “We're with you all the way through, Fig.”

The other six all drew in close, nodding in affirmation. Figment gulped, but nodded back.

“There we are, then. Let's go shrink ourselves a goddess.”

20.

The way down looked dark, and managed somehow to only get darker the further they went. Each step seemed to swell larger, wider, becoming harder to traverse, until the next one had to be climbed down. The castle was growing—rather, *Maleficent was growing*, and it was simply trying to keep up with her. Distracting as it all was, every step of the way, Figment kept hold of his thoughts:

*We're all fine
We're all fine
She can't hurt any of us
I'm stronger than her
She can't touch any of my friends
She can't do a thing to my brothers and sister*

The surging darkness of the stairwell slowly gave way to a ghastly, sickened green light that swelled as they entered into a vast underground cavern, blazing with green-fired torches embedded in the walls. Up beyond was pure black, and at the end of the foul chamber...was Maleficent. Her arms were out on either side as she kept her back to them, chanting to a flowing wave of violet energy that writhed in a large ball, shuddering and twisting, as if alive and trapped. On either side of her were the Red Death from Toothless's world, and poor Leon, both chained down tight, each one being drained, stuck in a death-like sleep.

“YOU POOR DEAR,” she cooed, speaking to the caged energy, **“AND HE WAS SO CLOSE TO JOINING YOU. I KNOW, I KNOW. HOW DREADFUL, HIS VANISHING, AFTER ALL YOUR EFFORTS. I DID TRY TO HELP, BUT HE'S GONE, UTTERLY LOST. I WON'T LET**

YOUR NIGHTMARES COME FOR YOU, THOUGH, NOT TO WORRY. THEY'RE OUT THERE, AND YOU'RE SAFE HERE. OPEN YOURSELF TO ME, ENTIRELY, I IMPLORE YOU. YOU'VE ONLY ME TO TRUST, NOW, MY PET.

“No!” Diablo cawed, the musclebound avian storming up to her, having reached the dragoness first. Even with his size increased by Figment, he hardly came up to her toes. “I’m your pet! Me! Look at me!”

Being so much smaller, now that the castle and chamber had grown larger around them, Figment and company were as far from Diablo as a great field or desert. Part of Figment was thankful that Diablo hadn’t pressed to get the magic relic-stone back from him, as the candies seemed more fun a prize...but the raven’s loyalties were now completely nonexistent, and anything could have happened.

“That idiot!” Spyro groaned, as they all double-timed along. “Stop!”

Too far away and too far gone, Diablo opened his beak, and swallowed the candy.

“Look...at...m-meeeeee—”

Right away, the tinier bird-god shook, and shook, and shook, worse and worse.

“Ah, h-how much power did you put in that candy?” Mushu asked, as they ran.

“Hey, right, you gave him a candy!” Spyro balked. “How’d you even get more? We were all out, in the last world, I saw it myself!”

“I...I made some!” Figment answered, before Diablo’s bellows overtook everything.

The raven spasmed and groaned, his glowing eyes rolling back as so much energy swelled within him that his feathered muscles erupted bigger, crowding and bursting out tighter, hotter, thicker. He opened his maw and exploded in size, his back bulk blowing up over his huge shoulders as his neck ballooned too big, then blew its pressure down into his inflating pectorals and lats.

“Huh-HAAAAAAH!”

His cries rose along with his body as it shivered, jerked, then ballooned lopsidedly larger, doubling in mass, shoving angrily up to Maleficent’s calf before his bulk exploded twice as wide again, surging too full, too big. Biceps as big as his entire torso erupted even higher, stretching and groaning as his thighs expanded to match. He wobbled and cawed awkwardly, closing his eyes, before detonating so big so fast that a torrent of air blew out as he heaved all the way up to the dragoness’ hips, then shook and panted, and *boomed* up to her full size!

Maleficent turned just enough to notice Diablo there, out of nowhere, the overgrown raven pulsing with overblown brawn. His huge beak clack-clacked nervously as it dipped between two mounding pecs, his breathing powerful and ragged, his feathers fluffing in excitement.

“DIABLO!” the vast female hummed, her glowing eyes widening.

“I...FOUND YOU...BACK...” he boom-spoke, shaking all over, before tensing in, moaning, and

doubling in size, again.

Figment and company all came to a shocked stop as the billowing bird bulged even larger than Maleficent, his incredible muscles burgeoning warmly against her scales. She staggered back, arms suddenly forced against an ever-growing wall of feathers and muscle as the panting Diablo continuously exploded larger, and larger. His back muscles raged against the chamber walls, smothering torches as his head shoved into the darkness, his thighs caging out around the evil dragon.

“WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS INTERFERENCE?” she growled, annoyance quickly replacing her shock. ***“I'LL NOT HAVE YOU DISRUPT THIS MOMENT, MY PET! THIS IS THE MOMENT, DO NOT BOTHER ME! PULL BACK, SO THAT I MIGHT FINISH—”***

Diablo cried out as his vibrating bulk *tripled* in size. The entire chamber was slowly replaced with cascading oceans of bulk as the moaning raven's body billowed up bigger, stronger, throbbing so powerfully that his breaths rattled everything. Arms as big as Maleficent was around butted against the walls and stone, as his beak pushed deeper into his pectoral cleft.

“Whoa,” Spyro muttered, as the tidal wall of dark plumage crept bigger and bigger, towards them. “Guess he stopped her, before we could. That’s one benefit!”

“I...suppose so,” Figment murmured, ready for a fight. “I didn't think I had made it *that* strong!”

“Wait'll I try *my* candy out, then,” Mushu chuckled, grinning.

“Dibs on the one after that!” Toothless added, wagging faster. “We can just let that bird-brain smother her flat, and call it a day!”

“Well,” Bartok said, coming up to Figment, “I dunno, Fig...don't we gotta address whatever dat funny light is? She was talkin' to it, like, makin' a deal, or somethin', yeah?”

“Right,” Figment replied, thinking fast. “Hold on, everyone, we're getting a major boost!”

As Diablo billowed bigger, still, Figment forced himself larger and larger, as Maleficent's concentration went elsewhere. In moments he had blown up to Maleficent's own height, along with the others—Cynder boomed up behind him, followed by Spyro, Toothless, Nestor, and Bartok, all of whom pitched and wobbled in surprise.

“Goodness, that is something to get used to,” Nestor huffed, his bulk twitching idly.

“It never gets old!” Spyro said, thumping his tail happily.

“Our powers should still be intact,” Cynder began. “We'll take just enough size off of Diablo, to give Figment access to that energy swirl, and—”

The entire chamber quaked in a rage as Diablo squawked, then rumbled, and lurched straight down, slipping smaller, then smaller, again, as more and more surging black scales pumped up underneath. One growing hand slammed against Diablo's swollen chest, another popping free under his rump and slapping up against his hip. A malicious red glow covered them both as the mighty raven shrank even smaller, feeding Maleficent more, and more, and more.

“Oh, right,” Spyro muttered, as the dragoness exploded bigger than Diablo, then bigger, yet. “She can do it, too, forgot.”

“Change of plan!” Figment barked, as Maleficent's groaning body burst too large for the chamber, forcing the shrinking Diablo up into the dark, and the entire company back against the far wall and stairwell.

HE'S HERE

The thought sliced through everything. Every fiber of Figment's magical body intercepted it, making the dragon perk up in stunned silence. Even as Maleficent's bulging scales and massive breasts ground them back into the wall, all Figment understood was that voice.

YOU'RE...REALLY...HERE-

“NOOOOOOOOOOO...”

Maleficent's swelling form rose and rose, her huge muzzle pushing up into the blackness overhead, her bust crushing and swelling into the entire group, taking their energy at the touch, feeding the ungodly goddess even more size and strength.

HELP

“YOU...ARE...MIIINE!”

Her roars had lost all patience, all the calculated smoothness and cunning. Now was only a seething, cheated anger, which grew into a pressure that blew her up bigger, even faster. The sheer wall of her breasts boomed larger against Figment, stretching and pulling black scales pushing harder against him, against everyone.

“Push back!” Figment cried as he felt other small dimples of force pushing her growing body, albeit ineffectively. In response, Maleficent simply escalated, snowballing frantically larger, until the chamber cracked and blew open, her vast, growing head and thick horns bashing up into the castle hall, scattering everything everywhere—and she wasn't stopping.

“DO YOU LITTLE FOOLS REALLY THINK...I WOULD LET YOU HAVE HIM!? I WILL NOT STAY TRAPPED HERE!”

Her bulbous rump smashed through pillar after pillar as her thighs and calves and feet overfilled the chamber below, her hips pouring out through the lower castle quarters. Walls only caught her stretchy bulk for a moment before cracking and bursting loose, letting her roar and swell on, unimpeded. Her huge arms burst through stairs and hallways, bashing walls apart as her head burst through the warping, snapping rafters, her muzzle pushing up into the throne room.

“I'D HAVE BEEN A PERFECT GOD, HAD YOU JUST

LET ME ABSORB HIM! ALL THAT WORK, THAT INGRATIATING EFFORT, UNDONE! MY PLANS RUINED, AGAIN, BY YOU! THEN, SO BE IT! I DON'T N-NEED HIM...IF I CAN'T ESCAPE IN GLORY, AS A GOD...I'LL BREAK FREE...AS A DEVIL!"

At those less-encouraging words, Maleficent curled in against herself, throbbing with darkening energies. Her horns pushed up into the top spires of the castle as they trembled with rage and power, her colossal breasts pressing hard against the front bulwarks from inside. The entire castle rocked and cracked, a meager shell, nearly undone by unending mass and swelling hips. Still, impossibly, she pressed on, forcing herself bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger, until the walls began to crackle and heave out, small streaks of darkness seeping in around her.

"NOW SHALL YOU DEAL WITH ME, WHELPS...AND ALL THE POWERS...O-OF HELL!"

The castle cracked, splintered open, then broke entirely. Figment had only a second's time to form any kind of protective barrier around them as the imagination-made stone and wood blew away and the tide of pure nightmares rolled in around them, around her. All any of the seven could do was hold tight as Maleficent opened her vast jaws, overhead, and began to furiously inhale. Slowly but surely, a seemingly infinite amount of darkness arced into her maw as the fell dragoness fed and fed, sucking pure nightmares into herself.

"What's she doing?" Spyro roared, as the scales underneath them started to rumble ominously. "She's insane! Isn't that pure...whatever?"

"She's...absorbing it all!" Figment yelled over the maelstrom of evil energy storming and whirling around their barrier. "But there...seemed to be so much of it, here! She must have grown strong enough to keep from being consumed by it, but still..."

"How does she expect to control it!?" Cynder asked, the shaking worsening outside.

"Eh, I don't think she does!" Bartok yelped as a fantastic *boom* overtook everything, and the immense floor of Maleficent's scales stretched impossibly wider, filling even their view.

Boom after echoing *boom* rode her growth spurt as the inhaling behemoth swelled to a horrifying scope, in seconds. The castle would have stood bigger than an entire galaxy, *before* Maleficent outgrew it. Beneath the ever-growing surge of living nightmares, there was the topside of the planet, itself surely as big as several thousand galaxies—and Maleficent was outgrowing it, fast.

However large she had willed everything to get, in her time on this world, it quickly proved pathetic in comparison to what the foul dragoness was becoming. Her vast belly swelled wider and wider, her hips bursting beyond control on either side as her rear ground into the wasted terrain, cracking and smashing into the crust with no effort. Her tail slapped against the curve of the very

hemisphere as it bloated larger, longer, wider, her wings flapping and trembling as her chest billowed bigger, and bigger. Her huge maw stayed open, taking in more and more, a dozen trails of darkness funneling in where seconds ago there had been just the one.

The massive planet crumpled into itself as more and more of Maleficent grew bigger, atop it. Her vast weight sank in as her stomach blew up everywhere, pushing her tremendous arms higher, surging up under her booming breasts and bulging nipples. A planet large enough to fit an entire armada of galaxies suddenly withered out and crumbled as the black dragoness ballooned bigger than it by an escalating margin. Her rump blew out the other side, crushing the core to powder as her massive thighs heaved out the other end, riding the deflating mass until it too was spent between her thighs.

“She's not stopping, Fig!” Spyro shouted, over the fury of the surging darkness. “We have to take some kind of action, here!”

“Like what?” Cynder asked as they shrank to relative grains of sand against her growth.

“Can you *will* her smaller?” Nestor asked, getting close. “I heard everything, I've seen how powerful you are, Figment! Imagine her powers are failing!”

“Imagine us bigger than her!” Toothless cheered, still grinning. “Or, give us the candies!”

“That's a thought,” both Mushu and Spyro agreed, in perfect unison.

“Let me try imagining her smaller, first!” Figment replied, closing his eyes in concentration. He thought and thought and thought, as the raging winds and nightmare howls subsided and died away. He put every trembling bit of himself into one thought:

She's smaller...she's getting smaller...Maleficent is shrinking down! Fast!

Still, the quaking ultra-growth under their feet only intensified as Maleficent fed and fed, ballooning twice as big, then doubling that; Figment and company were each several miles tall by now, but Maleficent was *thousands*, on a conservative guess.

And that was by this gargantuan planet's standards. His math would have to switch to that.

Finding nothing doing Figment let out a breath, took a few back in, and tried again. This time, he glared up at her, unblinking, pushing the idea further, and further, until it hurt:

SHE'S SHRINKING DOWN! MALEFICENT IS SHRINKING DOWN!

“That's not doing it,” Spyro huffed, kneeling down. He placed both scaly palms down flat on Maleficent's scale, and began to pull in power. “I can at least try and take a sliver of her sIIIII—”

In an instant there was so much Spyro that everyone was shoved into the barrier's interior wall, Figment included. With a deep groan of pain and joy Spyro swelled up and up and up, bulging with so much bulky muscle and warm scales that Figment's barrier began to stretch out to keep him contained. The barrier (and Spyro) inflated up to 10 miles, rumbled deeper, and loudly blew up to 30 miles...70 miles...210 miles...400 miles...600 miles!

“S-stop!” Cynder bellowed, trying to move, as Spyro's purple bicep mashed bigger and bigger against her bulk. “Spy-ro, quit it!”

“I CAN'T!”

The others writhed helplessly against his growth as Spyro groaned, trembled, and boomed uncontrollably up to 1,400 miles, quaking tighter. Still, as Maleficent bulged broader and thicker and heavier all over, he only proved to have grown to the size of a small tick. The 70,000-mile beast throbbed with evil force, her horns starting to stretch longer, curving out wider, thicker, her neck lengthening out; vast black pikes began to push out from her shoulders as her teeth grew longer, meaner. A bump swelled beside her neck at the base, before lengthening up into a ball at its tip, which formed another head, horns and all.

“DISAPPEAR, WORMS!”

One head bellowed the command as the other fed on and on, drawing in a hundred strands of the infinite nightmare around them, around her. It flowed and slid over swelling scales as Maleficent shuddered up to 300,000 miles, the neighboring planets becoming mere balls or baubles to her. The freed head opened its mouth wide, her breasts and belly blowing out bigger as she blew a terrible streak of pure malice at them, bright green death striking Figment's barrier.

Figment split his focus between the beam and expanding the barrier, so that Spyro's far greater girth was no longer crushing them so badly. Though the shielding held fast he could see another head growing into view, high up beyond her colossal bosom, and that head belched another geyser of energy directly at them, compounding with the first.

“O-okay, bad idea, s-sorry,” Spyro grunted as he twisted his hands back, so that his palms faced away from Maleficent's scale. The barrier swelled out wider, and wider, until Spyro could at least sit down, looming over everyone present. “Cynder, can you feed off me? We can at least keep up, without taxing Fig's powers any further...”

“Right!” she agreed, starting to swell up bigger, from Spyro's overloaded energy. “Figment, sorry to bother...but we had better take those last few candies, now, if we're going to be any help!”

“T-take them!” Figment roared, thinking up a new plan. “I-in the bag!”

Toothless was already on it, wagging in delight.

“Got 'em! Thanks, Fig!” he chirped, wiggling in place.

“Pass me one along, would you?” Mushu asked, extending a hand. Toothless slapped one down on the red dragon's palm, and the two bumped elbows in understanding. There was, happily, one for each, with perhaps one left in the bag—not that Figment was counting.

“Now, w-whichever takes those candies,” Figment shouted back, “use your size...to take a head and neck, and attack it! Stick close! The more we distract her, the more her concentration will falter!”

At that Figment's eyes closed, and a barrier instead formed around all seven of them.

“How do we get up there, to each one?” Bartok hollered, as more and more nightmares were drawn from the tiny neighboring planets and moons, all of which kept channeling into Maleficent. “She's growin' faster n' we can travel!”

“Like...t-this...”

Six portals popped up in front of the group, roughly their sizes.

“Whoa, you opened *that* many!?” Spyro gasped as one swelled big enough for him, then one for Cynder, who was nearly his size, now.

“I'm going...to warp you across her...body! It's fast enough! The barriers will hold, you'll be safe! Take the candies as soon as you get on the other side! Now, g-go!”

Each dragon took a portal, which all closed in unison after. Just as another vile head sprouted up beyond Maleficent's chest six flashes of light split open and Spyro, Cynder, Toothless, Bartok, Mushu and Nestor all lunged out, barriers glowing.

“Right,” Figment huffed, gulping, already worn out from the amount of juggling on hand. “Time to get on better footing!”

He took a moment to compose himself and spread his legs into a stance, prepared to imagine the mother of all growth spurts; he could likely further distract her by surprising her with his growth—

HELP

There it was, again, the voice. It rang through the chaos, crystal clear, and terribly sad.

“Who...who is that?” Figment asked, rightly. “You're that energy, I'm sure...but...what are you?”

ME

“If I find you...” he reasoned, going wide-eyed. “I could...yes! W-where are you!?”

He looked out over the landscape Maleficent had grown into, scanning the horizon of her bosom and her horrible heads as they snarled and gnashed. Each of the other dragons was wrestling with a neck or head, leaving Figment alone to figure that last piece out.

Figment doubled down, cleared his head, and strained until his face darkened.

I'm bigger...than her...I'm BIGGER...

Cynder swallowed her candy, and the effect was immediate. Her back muscles flared out, and out, and out, clumping and heaving over her massive neck and shoulders as her cleavage dimpled and dragged up along Maleficent's neck, swelling heavier and fuller. Her claws dug in deep as every muscle surged, her legs pushing down against the base of the neck; both monstrous digits wrapped in tight about it, constricting, as Cynder billowed up to over 300 comparative miles, then 3,000, rocketing so

much larger, in such a hurry, that her vision raced.

“Holy s-smoooooookes!” she thundered, as her body bullishly exploded to 30,000 miles, her every sinew trembling in overpowered delight. “What...did you put...in these!?”

She had grown bigger than a regular planet, way back when, at a smaller standard of scale—but the sheer ferocity of this spurt shook her to the core as her swollen body throbbed bigger, bigger, bulging out to 110,000 miles, to Maleficent's staggering million.

As she squeezed in tighter, a vast sphere of rocks began to form around her as countless drifting rock formations were called upon. Maleficent's head chuckled nastily as the rocks piled and piled until Cynder was covered completely and tumbled off into space, her grip duly lost.

Her vicious laughter was cut short, however, as a burst of dark flame shot from the formation and battered against Maleficent's huge neck. She howled, eyes flaring brighter, as her body responded by ballooning twice as big, in one huge, gushing push of size. An imagined clamp formed around Cynder's muzzle as she broke free of the rocks, but couldn't close over the barrier around her head.

“FIGMENT! YOU CANNOT SAVE THEM!”

Her voice was no longer angry, it was *volcanic*. It boomed out of one furious mouth, before the one next to it gulped down more nightmares as she swelled to 9,000,000 miles, total:

“YOU SNIVELING PEON! YOU THINK I CARE IF I CAN'T AFFECT THEM WITH MY IMAGINATION!? YOU'LL ALL BECOME GNATS TO ME, AT ANY RATE!”

Her hips bashed through marble-sized planets, shoving their partially-crumbled ruins aside as her expansion grew faster and faster. Cynder blew free of the formation, showering stone all about, before swelling up to 200,000 miles and flying directly into the back of one head, knocking it forward, and throwing the dragoness off center. She bellowed as her growing feet and toe claws swept behind her in a long, surreal arc through space, scattering entire moons apart.

Toothless peppered her sixth neck with a string of explosive blasts as he flew towards her looming head, twirled, then fired a dozen shots right into her eyes. Two other heads snapped to him, narrowing their eyes and returning fire with volleys of green energy. They narrowly missed as the growing Toothless spun off, blew up bigger, and swung back up, cracking the same head under its exposed jaw.

“Bigger!” he cheered, as the trembling black dragon swelled to over 50,000 miles, then 140,000, his bulk inflating so much that it struggled to stay confined within his polished scales. His pectorals poured out in size, pulsing larger and wider and stronger as he tingled and boomed to 250,000 miles. “BIGGER!”

Mid-chant, Toothless finally noticed the moon being hurled at him, by a massive hand.

“Easy!” he laughed, before Maleficent's huge hand spread open, in gesture, and that moon suddenly swelled to the size of the Sun as it crashed into him. It sailed all the way into another smaller planet, crashing off it like galactic billiards.

“Ah, geez!” Bartok huffed, the huge dragon-bat able to only smother his pectorals up against one of Maleficent's heads, blotting out her vision as he grew and grew. As colossal as he was growing, far bigger than any planet nearby, he still only managed to cover her muzzle and neck as he hugged into it. “Nice devil, there! We're good, yah! None-a...no, not that—”

A tremendously huge hand thrashed nearby, only missing on account of Bartok's pulling his bulky body left, in effect pulling her entire head over and away.

That same head only sagged lower and lower the bigger Bartok exploded, as he rumbled up to 160,000 miles...400,000 miles...his furred muscles roared so large and full that his death-grip managed to keep the head trapped there as his vast back muscles collided down on Maleficent's immense cleavage with a bounce.

“C'mon, hold there, hold!”

He respectfully insisted on as much as he bit his lip, snorted, and erupted even bigger, against her, his rear pushing down on her dark-plated breasts as he doubled in size.

Spyro and Mushu swapped back and forth between necks, their bulk swelling massively as they went. Spyro had blown up to 250,000 miles and had no trouble clutching one neck; he passed his neck to Mushu, who swelled to over 300,000 miles, passing his neck to Spyro, the two crisscrossing their way up, tying both necks together.

“Got 'em!” Spyro whooped, before sneezing, and blowing up to 600,000 miles, heaving with great boulders of twitching purple muscle.

“Some devil!” Mushu laughed as he trembled all over, clenched his fists, and shot up to 900,000 miles, their bodies growing fantastically bulkier, taller and wider. “Ain't even a Sun as big as me! Lookit!”

“Looking good!” Spyro roared, before a dark barrier formed around him, which filled with water rapidly. “Whoa, what—”

Maleficent's heads sneered as the fluid filled it entirely, leaving Spyro floating within it.

“Oh, man, Spyro! Hold up, I got you,” Mushu started, only for a cloud to form around his head. Barrier or not, the titanic dragon couldn't see what to do, or where to do it. “H-hey! Hey, I can't see!”

Spyro snorted, then felt himself over. Even in the imagined water sphere, he could still breathe.

“Hah! Joke's on you, lady! I can't drown!”

He motioned to go help Mushu, but spun around in the water. He stopped, thought, and started

to struggle in place.

“Wuh-oh.”

In reply Spyro tensed in, concentrated, and rumbled even deeper, forcing the next wave of candy-growth onto him. Both heads watched as he expanded bigger in the sphere, blowing up into a vast 2,000,000-mile tall god of a dragon, bursting the stretched sphere with his overflowing bulk.

“Hah, part two!” he bellowed, surging out to 3,000,000 miles in scope. He was so much bigger than he had ever grown, back in the smaller realm, with its meager, regular version of half a million miles. “Nice try, ugly!”

Nestor was by Mushu in moments, growing all throughout; his green scales surged furiously as more and more muscle piled onto his already-swollen form, pushing his chest out far ahead as his wings bulked out and his shoulders threatened to tear their sleeves apart in one thick burst of growth. He pushed the sensation back as he tripled in size, swelling up to 1,000,000 miles, an unthinkable size, then grew even bigger, still! He noticed entire planets in the periphery as they began to drift into his field of gravity, mere dots against his stretching body.

“Good grief, this is madness,” he panted, trying to swat and shoo away the cloud around Mushu's bigger form as he grew to match the red dragon's 3,000,000 mile stature. “How can anything get this large, and remain functional!?”

“You askin' the wrong guy,” Mushu said, shrugging incalculable shoulder muscles as Nestor swatted the last of the cloud off, giving the green dragon a thankful bump with his wrist.

Two enormous hands dragged through space on either side, catching every one of the six dragons off guard. They slammed together dead-center, snagging the entire company in one hard clap, bringing them up, up, up to all six furious heads (two of them still tied at the necks).

“I CAN'T KILL YOU, OR ERASE YOU,” Maleficent boomed, the 100,000,000-mile gargantua thinking through her sizzling anger. **“BUT I CAN STILL REMOVE YOU!”**

“What's that supposed to mean?” Mushu asked, as they all remained crushed together within both enormous hands.

In answer, Maleficent raised them up high through the cosmos, and flung them all, hard.

“I'M BIGGER THAN HER!”

Figment's voice followed his form as his body rocketed up in size, exploding so fantastically gigantic that even Maleficent's heads all growled in shock. The thrown comrades thumped into Figment's growing chest, bouncing harmlessly off as his growth halted their momentum. They, like the cruel dragoness, floated back in stunned awe as the purple dragon continued to *boom-boom-BOOM* larger, in a successive symphony of bulging bursts and swelling skin.

He exhaled, then opened his eyes, and he too leapt back through space.

“W...WOW! HEAVENS!”

His entire body towered through space, at such a staggering size and scope that Maleficent, standing at 200,000,000 miles in height, hardly reached Figment's knee. All of her heads gawked, eyes wide as the looming dragon smiled and gave a playful flex, perhaps hoping to intimidate her some.

***“T-THAT SHOULD BE THAT, THEN!
SURRENDER, MALEFICENT! I'M EVERY
BIT AS POWERFUL AS YOU ARE!”***

The others flipped in place, cheering him on, only for Maleficent's multiple heads to all start laughing darkly. Soon, they were in hysterics. Even Figment's monstrously vast self wavered a bit. He was so large, he could have lost planets in his pores. He was over two hundred times bigger than the Sun itself (even this world's macro-Sun) and yet, a bad feeling filled all that muscle and bulk, and it wouldn't go away.

***“SO, YOUR POWERS ARE GROWING, TOO. VERY
WELL! I SEE NO NEED TO BOTHER PLAYING WITH
YOU, ANY FURTHER, THEN...”***

It was then and there that, of all present, Maleficent did the smartest thing—which was also the simplest. She raised one thick hand, opened it, and smiled on every muzzle. There was no more nightmare to absorb, it had all been swallowed up. What came, this time, was no miasma, no cloud of despair. What appeared in her hand was a gigantic pile of candies. In her other, another mountain of them formed.

***“OH, I CAN'T DIRECTLY AFFECT YOUR
IMAGINATION WITH MY OWN... YOU ARE INDEED
STRONGER, NOW. SO, I SUPPOSE I SHALL PLAY IT
YOUR WAY.”***

With no effort she brought both hands together, and crushed trillions of candies into one massive, ebony-black ball. It vibrated and rumbled with freakish power, bolts of blue electricity scouring and dancing across its contours.

“Is she really—” Spyro began, as Figment and company watched her multiply it again, and again, until she had a handful of them, each one as scarily overpowered as the first. Every maw opened,

and she collectively devoured them all.

Figment tried to open a portal within her necks to intercept the candies, but nothing happened. Then, he remembered: he couldn't imagine such a thing, *at* her. She was as immune to his as he was to hers. As Maleficent's vast body began to quake all over, as bolts of energy coursed through her trembling chest and hips, Figment made his own pile of candies and made to eat them quickly—only for Maleficent to enlarge them into a single ball, so big that it stuck tight in Figment's jaws, wedging into place. He gagged, his huge tongue trying to graze it, but it was good and stuck. He frantically tried to imagine it smaller, but *she* had done the changing, and the ball remained as huge as it had grown. Unable to talk with his jaws open, Figment instead drifted back in space, gathering the others quickly in his hands as Maleficent's mad cackling filled the galaxy.

Her entire body billowed disproportionately in size as she shook and sizzled with power, her heads babbling and laughing, the payload of power wrecking her minds as the rumbling deepened.

Figment quickly brought the other six up to his candy, trying to tell them what to do with it—only, they already knew. Spyro took the first leap onto the candy, on their side, biting and chewing into it fervently. Toothless, Cynder, Bartok and Mushu joined in, followed shortly by Nestor.

As they worked at it, Maleficent didn't simply grow. Not this time.

Maleficent *ascended*.

All of known space, the entire galaxy, was summarily upended, *replaced*. All stray matter flew into the pores between surging black scales and purple plating as the dragoness' body overtook it in one blast of mind-shattering, cataclysmic growth. Nipples the size of planets suddenly dwarfed a galaxy, each. Her breasts boomed so large so fast that they skipped past the necessity of mile measurements, passed astronomical units altogether, and arrived at many thousands of light years. She didn't even grow bigger, so much as she *blurred* bigger, such was her speed.

A vast eye swelled past the neighboring galaxy as she trembled and burst even larger, her hips widening to maddening spans as she howled with all ten heads, and erupted infinitely larger. Feet big enough to crush part of the solar system sliced through macro-space, parting matter in great, annihilating swaths, her wings flaring out forever behind her.

Her thighs boomed and burst and swelled, unstoppable and wild, her scales groaning to contain her mass as she exploded bigger even faster. A monstrous hand cupped her breast, which spilled bigger, spreading thickening black fingers all the wider as they outgrew even her own grip.

Fifteen heads all sang and roared in unison as her growth *sped up*. Down far, far, far, far below, on the stretching ocean of a single rumbling black scale, Figment held on for dear life. Astonishingly, it was the other six dragons who protected him. Spyro, Cynder, Bartok, Mushu, Nestor and Toothless all huddled around him, their bodies having blown up considerably larger than even his.

“We've got you!” Cynder roared, as her 60 AU body ballooned up even bigger over Figment, along with the others. “Just, swallow your half, Fig! We need you growing along!”

“You heard her, pal!” Spyro shouted, making Figment gulp his other half of the candy down.

“I can't even see the end of her anymore,” Toothless marveled, his ear-fins perked up high, as

Maleficent's growth kept spiking up stronger. "How big are we!?"

"BIG," Figment huffed, the dragon billowing up and up, between them all. "She's just even bigger, unfortunately."

"We can't afford to get outgrown completely, Fig!" Cynder continued, as the roaring rush of growth overtook them all. "She's got the same power, I don't know how we're supposed to defeat her, in this realm!"

Figment thought a moment, as he continually bulged bigger, outgrowing even his friends by a healthy margin once again.

"We can't," he admitted, rubbing his head over. "We'll all just keep caught in a growth-of-war, until one side emerges as the biggest..."

"That's not the *worst* outcome," Mushu offered.

"Before everything that's ever existed is absorbed into the victor."

"...Gotcha."

Maleficent's godhood was terrifying, an endless, boundless, heedless explosion of unbridled power and growth. She roared with all twenty heads as she burst larger, spilling and gushing and bulging so big that her one breast eclipsed a neighboring galaxy, while her other nipple reached all the way across to a galaxy several orders down the way. The electricity snaked and whipped and snapped off her bulging scales as she belched fire, letting off just enough pressure, lest even she explode—the wrong way.

She throbbed so big that each successive wave of growth roared out past her, leaving afterimages, frames in time and space that briefly marked her stature. The color faded from each lingering image as the larger ones surged ever-wider, ever-taller, her body consuming the darkness between whole galaxies, until she butted angrily against a vast barrier, a membrane, but continued to bully against it as she swelled even larger.

A tangle of heads clumped together, each one bellowing and rumbling, pressed in between her massive shoulders and swollen traps as her booming belly bulged down heavily against the other half, rubbing and stretching its unseen boundaries until she filled it like a vast egg. A dusting of countless tiny galaxies glimmered against her swelling scales as she huffed, licked her muzzles over, and trembled *even worse*.

“MIIIIIIINE,” the heads all hissed in union as her growth exploded further, still.

Her cry of freedom shook existence as she hatched out of the realm entirely, bursting through its shell. There was a sort of unfurling as Maleficent's pent-up spurts blew out over the multiversal plain, pouring and rising across it at breakneck speeds. Vast spheres of glitter and galaxy hovered around her, suspended by unknown forces, and with a shuddering huff she outgrew the smaller ones,

ballooning up and up through more and more spheres of existence.

No more being trapped. No more obeying the rules of reality!

Countless humans, dragons, bats and pokemon all felt the seismic shift tear through billions of realities as Maleficent smiled wickedly, opened every one of her thirty mouths, and began to greedily inhale, when she stopped.

Something was wrong.

All of her heads looked about as her growth surged higher, and higher, then...stopped, outright.

Then, it reversed.

Before Maleficent could manage anything verbal, from any head, she realized the oddity. She glanced every which way, and found each finger missing. She pulled her colossal, reality-dwarfing hand back, finding them attached, only for them to vanish again as multiple smaller portals all consumed them. Another belt of size escaped, sucked into each one, as she saw one head vanish into nothing, then another, their necks just...halting, halfway up, into a larger portal.

“WHAT,” the center head gasped, as both nipples vanished into portals, then her tail, then her humongous toes. ***“WHAT IS...STOP! S-STOP!!”***

As she shrank steadily, still big enough to crush an entire reality sphere of galaxies with one claw tip, Maleficent finally spotted the source of her trouble: Figment!

There the tiny dragon was, floating before her, arms outstretched. He seemed to be completely, absurdly enormous, by all other standards—but she was still far larger.

“YOU MISERABLE LITTLE FLEA!” Maleficent seethed, shaking with fury. ***“RELEASE ME, BEFORE I ATOMIZE YOU!”***

“No, I don't think I will,” Figment said, as rudely as he knew how. At that, several more portals opened up around her knees, making them vanish as well, then along her horns, then her wings, making the dragoness lurch even smaller. “I don't think we can escape our problems, just by outgrowing existence, you know.”

“SILENCE!” she bellowed, throbbing even bigger—only to slip even smaller, right after.

“Can't' stop them, yourself, can you? I didn't just open up portals, Maleficent. Not this time. These...are imaginary. I quite literally made up multiple worlds, while I was trying to stay big enough to not get lost in your body. My friends gave me some great ideas!”

Spyro slapped affectionately on Figment's massive backside, about as big as Figment's head. Cynder was slightly larger, and hugged at his massive neck, while Figment's arms held both Bartok and Toothless close to his chest. Nestor and Mushu simply hung onto his hulking calves for dear life, having more trouble processing the multiverse around them.

“N-NONSENSE!” Maleficent blasted, fuming openly. ***“I ABJECTLY REFUSE TO BE***

UNDONE BY SUCH A CHILDISH, STUPID NOTION!

Perhaps to drive the point home, the looming dragoness created a sea of spikes, which all rushed at Figment, only for them to vanish into portals, which reopened and launched them back at her. They merely bounced off, annoying her even more.

“I imagined them, and linked them to the space where travel happens,” Figment continued, out of breath and exhausted, but smiling wide. “I can't seem to do much to the between...but I can join new realities to it, just the same. Like building road extensions out of countless stones. And since all of them connect to the between, and the between taxes your size...”

Maleficent shrank down more and more. She snarled and tensed, flexing herself bigger, and bigger, only to huff in defeat as more was taken right back out.

“You can't undo this,” Figment wheezed, trying to catch his breath in the barrier around him. “Just as I can't undo your imagination, you can't undo mine.”

“I CAN IMAGINE PLENTY!”

Thousands of the same kind of dark candy appeared as she cracked a snarling smile, and opened her mouth wide. Another portal appeared, just shy of her tongue, and the candies all sailed into it uselessly, before it closed, stealing them away from her closing jaws.

“Go ahead, use more energy!” Figment huffed. “You'll just wear yourself out faster.”

When Maleficent opened more portals, Figment strained harder, opening portals that sucked her portals in, effectively removing them all, one by one.

“No more p-portals...for you!”

A strange green portal opened behind Figment, which silently slid up to his tail.

“YOU HAVE TO CONCENTRATE...TO KEEP THIS GOING...” Maleficent chuckled, her one remaining head panting from strain. ***“LET'S SEE...IF YOU CAN MANAGE THAT!”***

A surge of power tingled through Figment's tail, making him rumble and rattle all over.

“Hmm?” he started, blinking. He looked back then grit his teeth, his entire body quaking.

“Fig, you okay?” Spyro asked, as the shaking grew worse.

“HAHA, LET'S SEE...HOW WELL YOU FOCUS ON ME...WHEN ALL THE POWER FROM MYSELF...FROM ALL THOSE WORLDS...EVERY SCRAP OF 'TAXED' POWER FROM YOUR ENTIRE JOURNEY...RETURNS TO YOU!”

The rumbling became so terrible that even Maleficent shook from its tremors, the reality spheres of the multiverse around them quaking as Figment opened his mouth to roar, but instead *detonated* in size. As Figment's body blew up his belly pushed hundreds, then thousands, then millions upon millions of existences away, going from planet-sized globes to beads, then to nothing as he

ballooned to unthinkable size.

As he did, however, the power surge fed into every portal he had created; as the other dragons held onto Figment's growing bulk tight, they briefly saw as the portals all around Maleficent swelled from the power influx, getting too big for even her.

One by one they consumed the startled devil-dragon, who realized her mistake too late as her entire leg vanished, then her arms and tail, then her massive belly, and at long, startling last, her final, screaming head.

21.

Figment's mind was coming apart. Over a safe allotment of time, maybe, he could have acclimated, grown into growing at such a frantic speed. As it was there was no time, and his body had no idea how to get this big, and still hold together. Some part of him knew: *nothing* could grow this big.

I'M ALRIGHT

I'LL MANAGE

I'M...GOING TO B-BURST

No amount of imagination could help what his panicking body foresaw. Maleficent's largest point of size was already microscopic, compared to Figment, as more and more of the between poured into him, all its unfathomable power pumping the purple dragon so big that he could no longer tell where he began or ended, where his extremities were; there was only the warm, bulging torrent of endless, all-consuming *growth*.

One scale alone far eclipsed even the larger reality spheres as they began to cling submissively to him, now mere motes. Trillions of universes poured into him as he moaned and shook, his bulk swelling impossibly massive, his body starting to glow with too much energy, too much power.

WHAT BECOMES OF SUPERMASSIVE BEINGS, ANYWAY?

Still Figment grew, without pity. Toe claws bigger than gods bulged longer, thicker, bigger, spreading throughout time and space, itself. He tried to signal his tail to move, to pull free of Maleficent's last portal, but it stuck tight. At the frantic rate he was growing, getting free of the border tension seemed laughable.

N-NO, NOT SUPERMASSIVE...ULTRA-MASSIVE!

"I can't believe I'm saying this," Spyro gasped, as the rest of the company rode Figment's growing scales, "but he's getting too big!"

"We'll be absorbed, at this rate!" Cynder said, as they all continued growing off of the super-candy portions they had consumed. It still proved woefully inadequate, even as they each reached the size of an entire universe. "There has to be something we can do, here!"

"Like what?" Bartok shouted. "He's growin' bigger than literally everythin' that ever was!"

Figment's god-roar finally escaped, and the force of it was of such a magnitude that time bent around it. Countless realities shifted a stray inch, and Figment's scales spread too-tight across his billowing body as the glow grew brighter, and brighter.

A-AM I...GOING TO BECOME...A BIG BANG!?! HEAVENS, ME!

CALM DOWN

The gentle voice cut through once again, making Figment open his endless eyes.

THIS IS ALL YOU NEED TO DO. OPEN A PORTAL.

WH-WHAT?

QUICKLY, NOW.

...BLAIR?

Was that his voice? It was so familiar, but so different.

DO IT.

Figment, the biggest thing ever to be, by a ludicrous margin, finally calmed down enough to concentrate. As his body began to bleed light from between stretched scales, and as his bulk expanded too big to fit anymore, a golden portal yawned open, stretching through all of creation and well-past it. It swallowed Figment's enormity slowly, as the dragon was still growing unthinkably fast; it took ten minutes' time, by Figment's count, for the tear to take him in completely, before vanishing.

Figment plopped down on nothing, but rested there just the same.

It took a moment for him to realize he'd moved anywhere.

He looked left. Right. Front. He pinched himself. Lord, gracious, he still felt so *big*.

"Close, there, wasn't it?" a friendly voice asked, heavy and tired, but tender.

Figment whipped around in place to see a vast...dragon. So much bigger than him. So big, in fact, that Figment's vision went fuzzy, from the strain of informing his mind of how much dragon he was observing. God or not, he would have gone mad, if he kept looking any longer.

"Heavens!"

"Oh, no, no, it's quite alright, Figment," the kindly dragon rumbled. "I'm still trying to condense down. I believe once I'm more...understandable, that you'll be quite tickled."

Again, familiarity banged away, assaulting Figment's thoughts.

"I know you," he said, working slowly to form words. "That was your voice!"

Back in Maleficent's chamber, all that time ago. It felt so long. He was...so much bigger than time, by this point. He felt himself swelling, still, yet didn't seem to advance anywhere new.

"I feel like I know you, too, hah," the voice sang, getting smaller, more awake. In a moment the dragon was all the way down, down, down, down to his own size, and Figment understood. He chuckled, rubbed his eyes, then laughed like a lunatic. He got the joke.

It was him. Darker, somewhat, more of a red hue...but oh, yes, It was Figment.

"I just can't thank you enough for saving me, really," the other omni-dragon hummed, beaming wide. He descended down onto the same invisible floor and hugged Figment tight. "Thank you!"

"That was you, then," Figment sighed, starting to quickly put it together. "You were trapped by Maleficent! I...I spoke to *your* Blarion, at your Academy! Goodness, it was a mess! What in the world happened to it?"

Red Figment's smile dropped some, and he looked down.

"Ah, glad to know I'm clever, elsewhere," he joked, or tried to. "Yes, that. You saw my machine in Blarion's apartment, yes?"

Figment nodded.

"I went on something of a similar trip, myself, a much longer time ago. I was...well. I wanted bigger things in life. Greater, more important things. I dabbled with Blarion's machine in the wee hours one morning, and got it working. Quite proud, that. But ah, the consequences. Sent me into a spiral, through world after world. I thought I could get back easily enough, but no."

"You went between worlds, as well."

"It was different, then," Red Figment said, placing both hands on Figment's shoulders. "I got so far out there, Figment. I saw such things, and I developed and I grew so much. But oh, the heart. My dear Blair. I made friends of my own, in my travels, I matured...yet, the further I went, the further my own happiness went, with it, from me."

"Surely, you tried to go back?"

Red Figment stared through him, his nostrils flaring.

"I did."

"But..."

"Yes. Being a fellow creature of imagination, I started forcing portals of my own, trying to head back the way I had come. But it's more a current than a stream, Figment! The power it took to force my way *back*, instead of ahead, was boggling. I had to imagine my way to virtual godhood, to manage it! So, I kept practicing, refining myself, my imagination, my power..."

“And, you returned? You must have. I saw that world...”

“When I forced myself all the way back, I...pushed my powers so far that they...advanced. Far, far beyond me. As I was when I returned, it wasn't long before...well, Blarion was delighted, angry, and fascinated, all at once. I certainly don't blame him. But I...my body...”

He motioned across himself.

“I started to grow.”

“What?”

“All the growth I had done, I...it wasn't so much literal, but...my subconscious, the shift in my perception...the old world, my home...it felt so...small. So I kept growing. I-I couldn't shut it off! I only inched up, the first few days, Blair hardly even noticed. But a week in, I was blowing up through the ceiling, swelling too big to contain! Blair and I worked frantically, trying to figure out a system of...payment, a currency...we used the machine, over and over, to put a part of me into, to...spend my growth, as it were...at first, it kept me a humble size, but soon, I was growing too fast! I burst through the Academy roof! There was no way to operate the machine when I was scrambling back out, and outgrowing bloody London!”

“Oh, my,” Figment gasped. Red nodded.

“Oh, indeed. I finally had reached a power so terrible, I couldn't stop growing larger and stronger. I did my best to protect the Academy, but I...I crushed everything around it. I couldn't stop swelling larger. I opened my own portal, and tried to force all my power back into it, in a desperation bid, but...that energy, it...it blew back, and the shock wave...”

“You don't have to go on,” Figment offered.

“No, I. I do, I. I did it. I practically annihilated the world by accident. I couldn't manage it, the reality of it. And my powers were still spilling over, and I was growing back up to colossal size, and I...I had to get away...”

“So, you escaped?”

“I tried. Unlike you, my journey seemed to be the first, and that power I developed was considerably more...destructive. The more portals I tried to open, the more my power grew, making me too big to open one large enough to fully fit into. I grew unchecked, bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, on and on and on. I think I grew for several years. At one point, I grew to the point of a mass conversion, and my powers, they...”

“Lord,” Figment muttered, unblinking. “You became complete energy.”

“I...ascended, yes. Multiple times. A god of a god of a god, heh. Fat lot of good it really did me, though. I could hardly help you, throughout your journey. Oh, Figment, I did try! I guided your leaps, I tried desperately to talk with you, in your dreams, in realities, everything. I was so, so alone, just a being grown so large that they became...well, a living reality, I suppose.”

“What?”

“Well, I suppose you could say I grew into a sentient reality. My energy overwhelmed existence, subsumed it. I became a cosmic entity. Imagine that! Or, rather, don't. Sorry. Isn't worth it.”

“So, you were...with me, throughout this entire thing?”

“Well, not up close. No. My mind was still anchored to that desolate world, my old home. I was quite stuck, for all that size and power. The longer I was in that state, the more detached I became, until I was more of a struggling idea than a full-fledged consciousness. When you opened that portal to my home ahead of time, before you could get powerful enough, and you brought Maleficent with you...I was beside myself. Finally, in all realities, another Figment had not only been born, but found its way into the between! Even dulled by time, and detached as I was, I still had to have you with me! But you...you broke from my current, and went away.”

“You mean...when I forced my way...into the pokemon world...”

Red Figment nodded.

“I know you didn't know better, dear,” he offered, patiently. “How could you? I couldn't reach your mind that far away, tell you why I was guiding you to me. It's not your fault. I had been stuck with Maleficent for years, by your time, while you went off the path...I resisted her, half-asleep, for a long time...but, Figment...the nightmares she made me have...”

They both shuddered, at the same time.

“Then...the Academy she tried to trap me in...”

“That was the old girl, herself, yes. The Academy I outgrew, and tried to save. I kept Blair alive within it, for a while. Eventually, all I had left was memories of him, and even those she began to warp. Sowed doubts of the past. I think she was turning everything I knew against me.”

“Then, when I was trapped in there,” Figment muttered, “the monster that chased me and overflowed the Academy...”

“Blarion.”

“No!”

“My memories of him. She must have induced another nightmare in my consciousness right when you were there, inside the building. I wasn't even aware, at that point. I thought...she said you had gone, entirely, and I sank into despair...I didn't realize she had even caged my consciousness, over enough time, that she had figured out how...”

“And your nightmares overtook everything, all while she tried to absorb your powers.”

“I think I confided in her, yes, in my loneliness. I don't even know what I showed her.”

Red Figment thought for a moment, then smiled back at Figment.

“But I heard you. I heard you, and your friends! I was so happy, at first, knowing you were making so many good friends! I...oh, goodness, your comrades! Right! You need to get back to them!”

“Spyro! Everyone, that...that's right! I feared that I—”

“Oh, you didn't crush them or anything, it's quite alright. This is just a meeting of two very, very vast energies. You nearly got as big as I did, you know! You're really quite something. I was a bit worried, seeing the way the power made you all so big, as well, but I think...I think you've taken a better path than I did. You're a better Figment, Figment.”

“You must have had a much harder time,” Figment sighed, taking Red's hands.

“It was trying. But you, sir! You still have an opening, to make it back. I'm no longer corporeal, sadly...but, if I show you how to go back, for good and all, knowing the control I know now...would you do one thing for me, please? Just one?”

“Of course. What?”

“Take me with you.”

“Beg pardon?”

“Let me share your body, if you wouldn't mind? I won't get in your way. I shall inhabit, not inhibit. I just. I just want to see...everything again...”

For a cosmic entity, Red was still having considerable trouble opening up. It was a big ask. But, Figment figured he could manage it.

“How do you do it?”

Red Figment smiled so big, he actually glowed.

“Really. You're really quite sure!?”

“We're the same fellow, aren't we?”

The face Red made would remain in his mind evermore. Every time Figment would ever need anything, fear anything, that was the face he would remember.

A flash of light overtook everything, consuming even the unbelievably immense god Figment had swollen up into. All that power condensed in on itself, crystallizing and clearing into something he could fully understand, as an entire cosmos politely wiped its feet and climbed aboard.

“Hey, he's...Fig? Fig, buddy?”

“Give him some space, Spyro!”

“I mean, he's gettin' smaller, yeah, but he's still glowin' funny...”

“It looks neat!”

“Give him a little room, Spyro, seriously.”

“Hey, y'all hush up, he's comin' to!”

Figment's massive eyes opened, and six very large little dragons were sitting on his belly, waiting for him to awaken. It must have been a long wait, because he was tackled with such a ferocity that he felt more attacked than hugged. Something deep inside of him drank deep, having possibly never felt it once in its entire mighty existence. Figment followed right after it, and hugged them all back tight.

“Too ti-tight!” Spyro wheezed, as Figment buried his muzzle into the lot of them.

“Well,” Figment began, looming over them all in the ocean of realities. “I'm back.”

22.

It took little to no time for Red's power and control to come into play. Strangely, Figment's powers came to him so smoothly, and so surely, that he almost didn't think of it when he thought of it; *it just happened*. As it turned out, joining with an overpowered cosmic force had immense perks.

The first portal back from the multiversal sphere system was straight to the pokemon world. Summoning Leon out of all that chaos and ruin was surprisingly simple: Figment simply imagined the Charizard there, in his palm, and so he was. The trip back taxed them further down, not that it really mattered anymore, so that when the portal opened over the ocean and a mountain-sized Figment stepped out into it, it didn't cause quite such a fuss. Nestor marveled at the technology as they awaited company—which didn't take long.

Lucario and Dragonite were at the scene, in mere minutes. Given that Lucario had ballooned into a 5,700-mile tall behemoth that loomed about the globe, it made sense enough. She was actually bigger than Figment, many times over. When Figment survived her hugs and greeted Dragonite back he opened his hand, to reveal Leon there, still asleep, big as a tiny toy to Lucario.

If she had been happy to see Figment, she was overjoyed to see Leon. Fixing their sizes also proved a snap, as a snap was all Figment had to do to bring them down to size. Sure, he left Lucario, Dragonite and Leon towering at nearly thirty feet tall, each, but at least they could get around.

Offers were made by Anders, by Stone, and even by Lucario herself, for them all to stay and celebrate, but Figment and the others opted to move on. Specifically, Figment had other meetings to keep, and a final one he was internally screaming to make.

Promises to return were gladly made, and as the pokemon world began to heal, as Dragonite and Lucario finally got Leon to open up, and as Anders searched for new work, the party departed.

Bartok combed through his thick white fur for ages as they traveled back to Russia, only to have no luck in finding back poor old Baba Yaga. It was only when they arrived, crashing down into the

snowy forests, that the same chicken-legged hut tromped over and allowed them all to shrink down and enter.

Old Baba was there, waiting, having long-since brought herself back home. Her anger that they had left her wherever was tempered by the hilarity of their suffering since then, and the crone graciously relegated the matter to 'even'. She lamented that Ludmilla was still out there, causing havoc, but Figment brushed the matter off, saying that they were headed to her, after Toothless returned to his world. Toothless, himself, opted out of such a tack, preferring to keep on traveling, until Spyro suggested that the dragon world needed a new king. That changed things.

Bartok bade them all goodbye, the first of the group to split off for real and true. The bat-dragon volunteered to take care of Baba, and maybe even protect Mother Russia as a guardian of some sort, rather than a swindling little cheat. It was a start.

The Reluctant Dragon had blown up considerably in size, in their absence; when Figment, Spyro, Mushu, Nestor and Cynder landed, they all landed on him, specifically. After several travel taxes, they had dwindled to about a thousand feet, and they found themselves deposited on a vast, tight, round belly, their friend's head looming high up in the clouds. It had only been about two hours, give or take, meaning the dragon still had a very sore Ludmilla caged in one monumental hand. The 3,000-mile tall behemoth demanded that they stay for tea, as the entire ordeal had given him a great idea for a lengthy sonnet and, time permitting, could they *perhaps* shrink him down, so that tea could be had.

The dragon was happy to stay considerably bigger than before they had all met, as it allowed him to loom over the village and keep a dotting eye on it, at all times. Given that Figment's powers had kept the human populace alive under such prodigious rump, for hours, it proved easy enough to snap him to a nice, humble hundred feet.

Kind or not, it seemed all dragons were just hard-wired for size, given Reluctant hardly debated the matter. No argument was made of it at all as Figment, Spyro and Cynder sat patiently through the sonnets, at an enlarged table, in an enlarged cave. Mushu, still embarrassed about the earlier fight, consumed a vast amount of tea in apology, then fell asleep through the rest. Nestor asked for the recipe.

And yes, the boiling pot had been cleaned out.

Mushu shook hands with everyone after arriving in China and apologized to them all once again, for the trouble he first caused. Their talks were interrupted, however, as an invasion of Huns cropped up; the invaders crested the tall hills, saw the five palace-sized dragons, then turned back around. Mushu chuckled, excused himself, and stormed off, breathing fire and wrath, chasing the invaders away with theatrically heavy stomps.

He reappeared momentarily, over the hill, making them promise to come say 'hey'.

Flora, Fauna and Merryweather were ecstatic. The three fairies flew around Figment, Cynder and Spyro, as they greeted them over and over. Nestor introduced himself, and took a look around the kingdom, being a mere 50 feet tall now, as the others were handed Ripto, caged and grumbling. In kind, Figment returned their magical relic-stone, happy to be rid of it. For a moment, he wondered if

Diablo had been swallowed up, along with Maleficent. For that matter, perhaps the Red Death had, too.

Figment let Cynder explain Maleficent's defeat and self-destruction; Merryweather was happy for it, though the others were mortified at the manner of her going, her *erasure*. Discussions rose about just where one would end up, going through dozens of separate portals, all at once, but Figment declined to comment further.

The kingdom celebrated in style, fireworks and all. Figment offered his magic bag back to the fairies, but Flora insisted it was his, so he thankfully kept it. Merryweather scolded the towering dragon, as *they* were ones who owed him thanks, and 'lots of it'.

There, then, was the last of the otherworld stops: the Artisan's Realm.

After partying and joy-hugging on so many worlds, the victory tour ended on a quiet note. All four dragons walked off the portal, now a 'mere' 25 feet tall, and just stood there as the winds swept through the fields around them, the sun setting low. It was time.

Nestor saw the silence and smiled knowingly, offering to see them later on. With that, he thanked Figment for everything, told him to come back anytime at all, and went on his way to a very shocked (and fairly envious) dragon village.

The silence remained, and the wind spoke for them.

“Ah, great. Good. I'm happy we're here,” Spyro began, fumbling for words. “As...much as I hate that we're here. I know it's not a *real* goodbye, or anything.”

“Of course not,” Cynder added, as the three stood there. “It feels strange, to be the one offering, as I'm not from this world, either...but, Fig...come back soon, okay? Even just to say hi.”

“Gladly, I will,” Figment replied, grinning a bit too wide, trying too hard. “You know it.”

“Good,” Spyro said, lightly chuckling. “Don't make me come get you, Fig.”

Still, they stood there, not ready to go.

“It doesn't feel real, does it?” Cynder asked, finally.

“None of it,” Spyro answered. “Boy, we sure tore it up, didn't we?”

“And put it back together,” Figment finished. “Feels as though we lived a whole life. Together.”

“Together,” they both repeated, looking down.

Again, the wind came, pushing only Figment back, gently. It had only come for him.

“Go on, git, already,” Spyro finally said, grinning lopsidedly. “Before I get stupid and lovey-dovey. You know, already, I mean. How we feel.”

Figment opened his mouth to respond, but closed it. Instead, he leaned in, and rested his head on Spyro's. They held, and Cynder did the exact same, until all three of them rested together, silent.

"I mean it, you come back soon," Spyro said as he pulled back, his voice scratchy from restraint. "I'll go and release Ripto, just for the excuse. You know I will."

"Fair enough. Guess I'm off, then," Figment sighed, backing away, but not turning around. "Thanks for looking out for me, when I was just a floundering putz."

"What do you mean, 'when'?" Spyro shot back.

"Oh-ho, watch it," Figment laughed, theatrically blowing up his muscles for show. He opened one last portal, and made to step through; as he turned back, Spyro and Cynder were pressed together, arms about one another, their free arms waving him off.

"Later, pal," Spyro yelled, over the whipping wind; Figment nodded, and finally went for it:

"Later, brother."

HOME

A small sliver of light bled through the curtains in Blarion's library as evening stole across London. A door shut, just beyond the kitchen, followed by the dull *thunk* of boots, before a satchel full of books plopped down by an old armoire, and settled.

Blarion settled much the same into the nearest leather chair, leaning back. The man had nothing to say, and no one to say it to, so the clock ticked away from the corner, steady and uncaring.

He had stopped looking at Figment's bed, having left it to the shadows cast by lamplight. It was better that way. The clock prattled on, too loud, but not loud enough to kill the quiet, until it was too much enough to handle.

"Well."

The human remained well-dressed and sharp, contrary to what was inside. He flung his coat off over a table, his vest still on, and he grudgingly returned to the blasted machine, eyeing it like a rogue kidnapper. Which, it was.

He thumped over to the other room, brought back a hammer and made ready to swing, much too hard. It wasn't the kind of swing that fixed things. Still, he held, frozen at the idea of it truly being broken. Which, it was. There were murderers and thieves and crazies all over the world, he knew that much—but what maniac could kill his own dream?

The hammer lowered and Blarion sagged with its weight, before slinking off to the bedroom, defeated once again. He didn't bother undressing as he sank into bed much too early, and kicked one boot off, then another. The ceiling wasn't of much help, but that's where he stared.

"He's gone, that," Blair told himself, out loud, repeating a slow, agonizing routine. "Figment's

gone from here. Too good for this world, I suppose.”

Every callous he tried to form refused to heal properly. He had to let him go.

“I know.”

As the lonesome male drifted off, his eyes heavy from it all, a flash of light stuttered from the library—from the machine.

When he awoke, to the extent that he did, Blarion felt it; weight and warmth, pressed in against him, like a big cat cuddling up for sleep. His eyes stayed closed, knowing it was another blessed, damned dream. Yet, he couldn't help it: his hand quested out until his fingertips met smooth scales and rising and falling heat, as something familiar breathed in and out.

It was just as it had been, over and over, as the days had rolled on. The same dream.

A little chin rubbed up the side of his leg and stayed there, before a long, happy sigh escaped.

Odd.

A brutally deep, wet snore broke out, and Blarion's eyes opened halfway. All he saw was the ceiling, but something *was* snoring terribly.

“Let's have that stopped, then, you please.”

“Sorry.”

“No harm for it.”

His eyes closed again.

“So, where were you off to, then?”

“Oh,” Figment yawned, curling in against his leg, “all over, really. I'll tell you in the morning.”

“There's a lad.”

The dreams had been mostly the same. This one time, however, Blarion slept fully, and slept well. In the morning, it was him and himself once again, and he lay there a time, just holding onto it, to the feeling. A blessing and a curse, sure—one that he would never let go of willingly. He couldn't.

However, certain needs bore out, and up the inventor finally went.

He exited the restroom and rounded the library, making a line to the kitchen, where a small purple dragon humbly sat in his wooden chair, nursing tea like a drunken man, the morning after.

“You don't need your books, there?” Blarion asked.

“Not anymore, no.”

The dragon sipped again, looking a bit bigger than he remembered, prior. Shrugging it off, Blair went to the pantry, and shuffled about a moment, before stopping cold.

He remained paused.

When he withdrew, his face was white; his beard looked aflame, in comparison to the rest.

“Hello?” he finally asked.

Figment beamed, unable to keep it off of his muzzle.

“Hello.”

The man was at Figment's side so fast it flipped the nearest chair away. Ceremony be hanged, he had Figment in his arms tight, and kept it that way. He said nothing for the longest time, and neither did the dragon. His tail whipped happily about, but otherwise, no motion, and none needed.

“About bloody time,” he managed to say, putting his top hat on Figment's horns.

“Sorry for that, Blair, truly!” the dragon laughed, squeezing him back. “Oh, but I did have a time! The machine, it went haywire! I was sucked right up! The places I wound up, gracious! I'll have to novel the thing out proper for you!”

“I expect it, my lad!” Blarion said, nodding firmly. “You must...er...I should say, you do look a bit...taller, here. And, dare I further venture...a bit darker?”

“Why, do I?” Figment chirped, as Blarion realized he was no longer hugging Figment up, but that Figment was hugging *him. Up. Off his feet.*

“Heavens,” he muttered, taking it all in, as a ten-foot Figment gently held him. “I suppose the trip *has* been good for you, then! To think, my dear Figment, growing up!”

“Imagine that,” Figment replied, all smiles.