

KURO: A Dragon Lord's Son

An Isekai Written By: AiraFox

Chapter 6: School Never Changes

As I sat at the small desk-sized table in the castle's private library, the instructor my father had provided for the day tapped a piece of chalk against a black board. The chalk was unlike the kind I was familiar with in my world. It served the same function, but instead of being a single stick, it more or less resembled a misshapen arrow of impure granite, but it had a much stronger scent that I could whiff from even behind my desk. I imagine that it was similar to what my ancestors used long, long ago.

The instructor was a human, one that resided within the capital city. He was a tall man with short blond hair and a long beard that was starting to gray toward his lips. He was from a wealthy merchant family, evidenced by the deep red vest he wore over a cleanly-pressed, white buttoned shirt equivalent to what would find the typical office worker wearing in my world, even though the materials used to make it were obviously different. His vest was emblazoned with my father's crest, a sign that he at the very least had my father's trust.

Naturally, Jathir had not trusted the human enough to be alone with me, as there were about eight others in the room with us. Half were kobolds, but at least two dwarves and two beastmen also filled up the seats. The reason the human was teaching today's lesson was because it consisted specifically of merchant trade.

Dragons were often thought of as either stupid beasts or wise scholars, but even the most intelligent of dragons at one point were prone to swindling of man. From then on, it became customary for dragons to learn the tricks of the trade as to better manage their hoards if they bothered interacting with the other races. Though I was very young, my father wanted to get such teachings out of the way immediately. I was smart enough in his eyes to handle it. He was not technically wrong with his assessment of my abilities.

Truth be told, I spent most of the lesson sleeping. My body was still sore from the previous training regime with Valka and there was little this human merchant could teach me that I did not already know. Their math system was identical to ours, though with varying symbols. A plus symbol was denoted by a single dot, while a minus symbol was replaced with two dots next to each other. Multiplication was handled with two dots slanted diagonally downward to the right, and division was two dots stacked on top of each other. Exponents and parentheses were nearly identical, but more advanced formulas common for classes I dealt with in high school and college were exceedingly rare here. Only the most dedicated of scholars who dabbled in science instead of magic bothered with those. I only had to learn what a merchant would when dealing with paper, an abacus, and scales.

Once the instructor had gone through the method of showing how gold coins are weighed on a scale for quick counting, I was comfortable enough to pass out and rest. Though I was not seeking a degree in Business back in my world, I had to take some classes.

“Lord Kuro!” the human called out. I heard him, but I did not want to get up. Unlike Shaanes and Valka, nobody here had the wherewithal to try and disturb me, much less inform Jathir about my actions.

You're teaching a grown man stuff you could teach a 10-year-old, I grumbled in my own head. It was no wonder why I was so bored. If this were a lesson about magic or even the history of this world, I would be interested, but not stuff like this..

The older man sighed. He wanted to stop until I woke up, but if he delayed his lesson to the point it put me behind the schedule Jathir desired, he would be lucky if being fired was the only thing that happened to him. With that knowledge in mind, he decided to continue with his lesson plan and just hope that I was either faking it or that I would absorb the knowledge in my sleep. Fortunately for him, I would likely be able to answer any questions he asked me toward the end of the day.

By the time I'd opened my eyes again, four additional boards had been filled to capacity with information. He really hadn't stopped his lesson for my sake, but he made sure to leave behind plenty of notes that were easy enough to understand. It was not surprising as everyone knew I was literate when it came to Accom, but now I was starting to feel bad for my behavior.

The contents of his teachings were various tricks merchants used to get a lower price from a supplier or unknown adventurer. They were written from a point of view showing how to use the tricks yourself, as well as how to counter those using the tricks. One such trick was pointing out the potential flaws in material that both parties knew were not present, but causing doubts among others so that the seller would become hard-pressed to sell it a lower price or risk losing the ability to sell it entirely. Some would even divulge the various tricks they would personally use to others to give credibility to their arguments. It was a trick I had heard about before, but he went out that the best way to counter it was to call their bluff by pulling in a friend who could purchase it and would keep it if they were to actually buy it. A panicked buyer would often see the sale being made and attempt to a higher price of their own just to get their hands on it.

Much of what he had revealed to the others hoping to learn from him were tricks I had learned on my own from either media or my own research, but it had far more value in this world.

“I won't ask you to try any of these methods right now, but I do want to make sure you understand how to appropriately value items and count gold coins quickly,” he announced as he concluded his lecture. “Lord Kuro, we'll start with you as this is supposed to be YOUR lesson.” His eyes fell upon me, darting quickly toward the board on the far left as soon as I made contact with them. His hint was obvious, but it was not something I needed.

“All right, my young lord!” announced the human. “On this table here I have placed three gemstones.” He pointed to his right where there say a ruby, a brightly colored golden topaz, and a diamond. “First I want you to choose the most valuable gem on the table.”

He had apparently gone over how to appraise gems in his lecture as well; I would have to admit that it was something I probably should have been awake for. I could use his notes, but they would not be as helpful condensed like this. With no other option, I looked over the gems on the table. The obvious choice seemed like the diamond, but something told me that was too easy. Whether it was common sense, a dragon thing, or

some unknown ability I possessed, my eyes were drawn toward the topaz in the center. There was something different about it. Following my gut on the matter, I picked it up to examine it. The human was expecting me to pick up the others to check their quality, but my gut was telling me this was it. My decision made, I proudly presented it to the lecturer.

“Ah! Excellent choice, Lord Kuro!” he complimented with a clap. “The Imperial Topaz is indeed the most valuable of the three. While in not perfect condition, it easily goes for 50 more coins than the diamond even in a rough market. Perhaps I was wrong to think you weren't paying attention, but before I get ahead of myself, can you tell me how much you think it is worth?”

I recalled a similar diamond on the market as much father carried me through one about a year ago. Why I still remembered the price at all I haven't a clue; perhaps it was a dragon thing. It was about 700 gold, and this person was telling me that the topaz would be worth 50 more in a bad market. Keeping that in mind, I took a guess.

“Ei... Eight... hund...red?” I guessed as I tried to force my dragonic maw to make the correct sounds.

“Off by about 20, but not bad,” the man replied with a smile. “Now use the scale method to quickly count and authenticate 820 gold coins by weight.”

If the average gold coin was about 33 grams, then 820 would be over 27 kilograms according to some quick math. He only had enough weights to equal a kilogram, so I made a small effort to make it look like I was checking the weight of between 20 and 30 coins before stopping at 27. I separated the stack into 10 stacks of 27, quickly weighing each one to make sure no fake gold coins were among the pile. It took me only a couple minutes. As I portioned off the last pile, the silence was disturbed with the eruption of clapping.

“Amazing work, my young lord!” the human cheered with similar comments being shouted by the others in the room.

The weighing and counting was no big deal. It was the one thing that did not deserve any such praise given my origins. My mind was still on the fact that I somehow had remembered the price from about a year ago.

“And that's everyone!” announced the lecturer, alerting me to the fact that everyone else had gone while I had been lost in thought. “It has been my pleasure to mentor you all. Those of you wishing to learn more should stop by the Merchant's Coalition branch in Turst Town. We frequently offer free seminars for all new members.” Finishing his announcement, he began to gather his things. “Now the rest of us should clear out of here so Lord Kuro can begin his next lesson.”

“Change of plans!” rang a voice from the back of the room. My fur stood up as I recognized Shaanes' voice. “Lord Jathir has requested Kuro's presence. I will be taking things from here.”

That was the signal for me to rise to my feet and make my way to her locations. My limbs had gone stiff from the tone of her voice. To everyone else, nothing seemed out of ordinary, but to me, the subtle ticks in her voice told me that she had been standing there for a while. Sure enough, I found her with her back against the wall near the door, her arms crossed and her slit pupils watching my every move.

“Had a nice nap?” she smirked under her breath. My tail straightened. I was not afraid of her telling Jathir about it, but about how she would be sure to torment me later

in some way only she could, like a sibling who had blackmail on you. “Well, you completed your lesson, so I’ll let it go this time. Honestly something like this seems like a waste of time to a dragon like you, but Lord Jathir did say it was important to take note of human customs, especially trade, so you could rule over them effectively. Still, I have noticed you seem to understand humans rather quickly.”

Huh? She's going to let it go? The news surprised me to say the least. There was nothing in her tone or movements to denote a lie. It took me a moment of reflection to realize the other thing she had pointed out. She had observed several past lessons I had over the years, but it was still a rare enough thing that I never suspected her to catch that particular detail about me. She sure was sharp.

“It could be based on the kind of dragon you are, I guess,” she pondered. “Not that it really matters. You are you.” Her head suddenly perked as she recalled the reason she had even come to the lesson in the first place. “Ah. That’s right! We should head there now. Your father requested your presence as soon as you were finished with your lesson of the day. I even had to turn away your tutor for your lesson on ancient scriptures today.”

That would have actually been interesting. Why couldn't that have been today?

If my father had turned away from the schedule he had set for me, then something must have come up that caught even him off guard. Unless he forgot something. That was also possible knowing him.

I followed Shaanes down the hallway to Jathir’s reception hall. It was a room that was the equivalent of a throne room, complete with a dragon-sized throne and murals he had made of him. There was also a giant pillow off to the side of the room where Jathir would greet important guests when he was feeling particularly lazy. Although it seemed like he was proud to show off his vanity, he actually rarely used the room unless he was attending to an important guest. Two of Valka’s guards were positioned outside the main door, not that anyone would be able to truly harm Jathir. They were mainly there as extra intimidation and to deal with small fries the dragon did not want to be bothered with.

As we entered the reception hall, a half-dead beastman resembling a fur-covered lizard with otter-like ears and tail was sitting upright in a chair that had been prepared for him. He was guzzling water like a desert elephant on a flooded plain. For once Shaanes was just as confused as I was.

“Lord Kuro, your lordship,” she said with a one-kneel bow, an open palm across her chest. “Pardon my asking, but what happened here? Did something bad happen?”

“This guy?” Jathir queried, resting his cheek upon a closed fist with an elbow on the throne’s armrest. “Don’t mind this idiot. The Kingdom of Neusea sent an envoy with a urgent request for me. This little dumbass mistook it as an emergency and rushed here without stopping to refill his water canister. He passed out as soon as he arrived.”

Neusea? I was still not entirely familiar with all of the countries on the continent, but from what I understood, they were another country with diplomatic ties to our own. They maintained neutrality for the most part, but they paid our country large tariffs in exchange for protection in the event of an attack. As they were positioned right along the east coast and were a major source of trade with countries from across the ocean, they would be the first in the line fire in the event of a naval invasion. Their army was powerful, but the kingdom’s size meant their forces were stretched thin. Unfortunately, the neighboring countries that didn’t belong to Jathir were not very powerful.

“Urgent request?” questioned Shaanes. Yeah, I wondered that too. It sounded

pretty important.

“They said that during their recent shipment of goods from overseas, an envoy from the Daizin Empire approached their king,” my father explained with incurious rumble. “They are demanding an audience with me and are seemingly ill-prepared to make the journey themselves.”

“A trap?” inquired the feline beastman.

“Pro'ly,” the Neausean envoy butted in, still out of it. “Hell if I know!”

“My dealings with them have been minor at best,” admitted Jathir, “and they weren't the best. That was nearly a century ago, though... I haven't the foggiest idea what they would want with me now.”

“And you're going to go?” Shaanes pressed further.

“I'm rather bored, so I might as well play their game,” Jathir replied with a disinterested face, though a smirk slowly began to crawl up his cheeks. “And I'll be taking Kuro with me!”

“Is that wise, my lord?” sprang a voice from an attendant who had overheard the conversation, but remained quiet until now. “The young lord is strong, but he's still rather young to be able to defend himself if you get into trouble.”

“He'll be safer with me than alone here with all of you,” my father assured them all, though it felt like he was speaking to me too. “Although I doubt they'll try anything, by now the rest of the Octonary is aware of Kuro's existence. As long as he's still too young to even speak fully, I'd rather not allow a single of them to get any kind of leverage over me.”

If I understood everything correctly, Jathir was going to engage with a foreign power with possibly violent intentions, and he wanted to bring me along with him. If he was as strong as everyone made him out to be, it was doubtful there was any risk, but bringing someone like me to such a place did not seem the most wise. Then again, he had a point; I was probably safer with him than here. And it would give me some time away from Shaanes waking me up every morning.

“It will take us a few days to get there,” Jathir stated aloud. “Although I do not expect to spend more than seven days, I make take Kuro out for some private time after, so we may be gone as long as fifteen days.”

The others in the room were a bit surprised that my father would be away with me for that long, but they did not question it.

“We'll be departing immediately,” he declared with a sinister smirk in the envoy's direction, “because this is an URGENT request.”