

KURO: A Dragon Lord's Son

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Chapter 3: Two Years Later

KNOCK *KNOCK*

“Lord Kuro! It's time to get up!” came a loud and grating, feminine voice. It was a voice I'd heard a thousand times and sounded like kittens going to town on a chalkboard. *Ugh. That voice...* I had been having such a nice dream that I did not want to open my open my eyes.

KNOCK *KNOCK*

“KURO! I know you're awake!” screeched the voice again.

Damn that Shaanes was astute. Then again, her voice could probably rouse the dead from their eternal slumber. Who needed something like an alarm clock in this world when she could do the work herself?

“I'm coming in!” she shouted again through the door. Due to my position and age, my room did not contain any locks on the door so that guards could rush in without any kind of impediment should my safety be at stake. Although, it would not be wrong to doubt such a think would have stopped somebody like Shaanes.

Within seconds of the door swinging open, I felt a pair of large paws resting upon side. The weight was nearly crushing, but at the same time I could easily push it off. Soon my entire body was rocking along the bed.

“Lord Kurrrrrrrrrrroooooooooooooooooo!” she cried with an incensive whine. “Get up! If you don't, your father will yell at me again. Kurrrrrrrrroooooooooo! I know you're awake!”

Yes, but just because I'm awake doesn't mean I want to get up! What good is essentially being a prince if I can't sleep in even once a year? Those may have been my thoughts on the matter, but Shaanes would never let up. As her voice assaulted my eardrums up close again, I finally answered her back. “Gwarm arrrp! (I'm up!)”

“I know, I know!” she replied, lifting her paws from my body. “It's not my call. Lord Jathir said to get you up and ready.”

I roared back at her and finally rose from my bed, if one could even call it that. It was pretty much a large pillows covered in the furs of various large animals. My room was considerably better than it, actually possessing a human-sized desk and chair, as well as three cabinet shelves filled to the brim with various books.

My attention was turned away from Shaanes as I dressed myself appropriately in a black vest tied with red laces in the front to keep it in place. Jathir had a real thing for black and red, I had come to realize. The emblem of a black dragon was sewn onto the front, though if not for the silver outline on mine, one might not have noticed. The others who wore such an emblem had theirs outlined in red.

It had been a little over 2 years since I was reincarnated as a dragon. I had grown considerably since then, only slight shorter than the average adult female in height. My tail was probably about 75% the length of my body and my wings could reach the length of my arms when fully extended. I was still very much a juvenile for my species despite

my growth spurt, although I apparently would not reach the size of a full-grown human until I was about 5 if everything my father and the others told me was correct. From then on I would experience another growth spurt every 10-20 years.

Unfortunately, my biology had yet to fully catch up with my increase in my height, so for the time being it was physically taxing for me to speak a language that humans and most other races could understand. If I did not take my time, it came out as weird roars. Despite that, it did not take my father and the others long to discover that I could understand them. It would have been one thing if Jathir spoke in Draconic; apparently all dragons were born with the innate ability to understand it, even if they could not speak it. However, Jathir and his minions were often speaking a language known to the natives of the world as the "Common Accord" language, or "Accom". The fact that I could understand this language from such an early age was enough to drive Jathir into a fit of glee. I was being praised as a genius, even though I only understood them because Accom just happened to be modeled after my native tongue. At least in its spoken form.

Having dressed myself in what little was required of me for now, I faced Shaanes. She was still presenting herself in the visage of a large white cat-like creature with two tails, her form slightly taller than my own even when she was standing on all fours. I shot her a glare. She looked innocently toward me with her dark cobalt eyes before finally catching on.

"Right. Apologies, my young lord!" With a bow, she gracefully jumped up into the air and with a flip forward, stood on two legs. She was now humanoid, looking much like those catgirls from Japanese stories, though her face was masked with bright white lines for whiskers resembling thick warpaint. In her human form, if you could ignore the two cat ears above her head and her paw-like feet, she wore scale armor made from a black serpent she had hunted herself. If one didn't know otherwise, she could easily be mistaken for a man as her chest was incredibly flat. This was a common thing for female beastmen.

Shaanes was a rare breed of beastman. I'd learned most beastmen were incapable of transforming between a beast state and human state as evolution had weeded that feature out over the generations. However, a fair number of them could use magic to draw upon their primal urges on times long past. The severity of the transformation varied between individuals, but full transformations like Shaanes' were rare.

"Lord Jathir awaits!" the feline beastman reminded me. Her voice was far less eardrum-scratching in her human form. I would almost call it pleasant, but it was still a bit too high-pitched for that.

My schedule consisted of two days of training with Valka or whoever my father assigned to my combat training, two days of scholarly studies, one day of rest, and one day of being beside Jathir as long as he was around. The concept of weeks and weekends did not exist here, at least not in Jathir's domain. The calendar was split into six seasons of 60 days a piece. The seasons were Dawning, Spring, Summer, Harvest, Fall, and Winter. We were currently in the Spring 40s, though the exact date had not cemented itself in my mind.

Just outside of my room was a long corridor of a castle hallway. It was not long before I learned that this was indeed a former human settlement that Jathir had made his own. To my surprise, he had not completely stolen it. While the territory was indeed

something he had claimed for himself, this castle, his main lair, had been long since abandoned. It was besieged by war long ago and the capital was moved due to the many deaths that occurred. Once he took ownership of the land, Jathir made the humans repair it in exchange for their lives. All of the humans in the country lived under the rule of Jathir. The territory had expanded over the decades, but Jathir considered this location to be his central base of operations. Several outposts were littered throughout the region.

My room was along the center courtyard, something I could best describe as a garden in the center of the castle-grounds. It was large enough to be a small park from my world, even possessing a small pond. Shaanes and I walked down the corridor and took a left toward the banquet hall. My room was not far from it in terms of the castle's standards, but it was a couple hundred meters; not like I'd measured it.

As we neared the banquet hall, I could already taste the smell of roasted Roc. The large avians made their home in the mountains to the west, so it wasn't uncommon to find some that ventured further out. As Shaanes and I opened the door, the smell hit me with the force of hurricane winds. I nearly coughed at the overabundance of spices used. Jathir had a large drumstick that he was continuously taking bites out of.

Breakfast may not have been a big event every day, but Jathir enjoyed making a spectacle out of everything. My birth was not the first thing he celebrated in a grand fashion, nor was it the last. As much as he enjoyed terrorizing and tormenting humans, he sure made the effort to partake in their customs when he felt the need to be spoiled, evidenced by the spread of meat on marble and wooden platters. Prior to meeting Jathir, I never would have thought dragons cared about such a thing.

Jathir finally noticed me.

"Kuro! My boy! Get over here and eat! We have a busy day planned today!" greeted the dragon with a mouthful of fried bird. My name was being called, so I had little choice in the matter.

After seating myself beside my dragon father, I helped myself to my own portion of the Roc meat. Comparing it to food humans from my world ate, it was like eating chicken that had a thicker consistency, but deeper flavor to it. If chicken had a lighter taste when compared with a slab of beef, Roc would settle somewhere between them, but not quite in the middle. At Jathir's insistence, the meat had been loaded with spices powerful enough to knock an ordinary person off their feet. Chili peppers may have been as bland as saltine crackers with whatever was layered atop the Roc meat. As dragons we were immune to heat of peppers of spices, but the human part of my mind still received a punch whenever such a thing tackled my nostrils.

My teeth were able to make quick work of meat. I could probably crush bones with how strong they'd gotten. Roc was large enough to be filling, so my stomach felt satisfied. Despite eating what seemed like a third his weight in meat, Jathir's gut had not grown any larger. A loud, fiery belch filled the room as he unceremoniously rubbed his stomach. The gas erupted into a blazing fireball that dissipated just as quickly as it formed.

No sooner than he finished had the dragon pulled me over to his side, pressing my head to his gurgling gut, though it probably wasn't his intention to force me to listen to the sound of bubbling belly. "Come, Kuro! It's time for our meeting!"

Meeting? That was the first I'd heard of such a thing.

"The four of them together... I can finally show you off!" Jathir cheekily

snickered, a dark smile spreading across his face. "They're gonna be so surprised!"

There it is! I thought to myself. He had an ulterior motive.

As Jathir rose to his feet, he tugged me under his arm like he was holding barrel. It was not comfortable against his my midsection, especially after I had just eaten. "Gwaou gran me ro ramit?! (You want me to vomit?!)" I roared in his direction, straining my vocal cords to try to try speak Accom quickly. I soon realized that it would've been smarter to just growl at him like a normal dragon. Though not Draconic, he would've actually been able to understand me.

"Calm down, Kuro," Jathirs chuckled in response as he dragged me outside to the courtyard. He leapt through an open archway window seeing how it was closer than trying to go out through the front. How his fat ass fit through it in such a swift motion astounded me more than some of his other feats. "It'll be far faster for the both of us if I just carry you! I know you can't fly long distances or too fast yet."

I cleared my throat and breathed in deeply. I just had to remember that until my internal biology caught up with me, I would have to slow down and take my time when speaking. "...an' You. 'old. Me. Better?" While not great, that was the clearest I'd spoken all day.

"You're getting there," the dragon smirked, tucking me under his arm. He had shifted his arm so that it was up around my chest instead of my stomach, ensuring that my arms were outside his grip. If I kicked my legs up against his side and wrapped my arms against his size, I found that I was actually fairly secure. It still was not a good or comfortable position. The claws on my feet did not seem to bother him.

"Lord Jathir!" Shaanes called out after finally catching up. "When should we expect you back?"

"Hmm?" Jathir scratched under his chin with his free hand. "If I'm doing all the flying, it should only take us about a quarter of a day, so... by dinner, maybe? It should be a quick visit if it's just me and those four."

"Understood. I shall inform the others," the shapeshifting cat beastman replied with almost a purr. She seemed pleased just hearing him talk to her.

Jathir flicked two fingers her way in a "See you later!" gesture before bending his knees and flexing his wings. "Hold on, Kuro!" he instructed. Heeding his warning, my grip tightened.

The dragon blasted himself full-speed into the air, expelling all the force he'd built up into his legs. The fur atop my head that best resembled hair peeled back in the turbulent winds experienced by force Jathir was moving. He flew faster than any car I'd ever been in, let alone anything I'd stuck my head out of. I may as well have been fighting a hurricane at this speed, but my father's firm grip managed to keep me in place, even with only one arm. I'd thought about asking who we were meeting with, but the speed would probably carry my voice away before my father would hear it.

My body slowly began to adjust to the speed. As I gained the ability to actually see forward and around me instead of just of a blur, I got a good look at the ground below. Scooching my head forward, I could see that we passing over some wide open plains with various creatures, some of which would be called monsters by the humans, running around freely. I didn't recognize the surroundings.

"This is Drahart!" Jathir shot my way. I'd grown so used to the speed that I didn't realize he had actually slowed down a bit. Apparently he had noticed my curiosity.

“Dra...hart?” I slowly responded now that we were moving slow enough for me to talk with him. It was a country I knew was allied with our own territory, but I had truthfully never been outside the country's border. My studies had not gone into their history or why they were allied with us. One thing I did remember, however, was that it was seen as an ally Jathir wanted to keep at all costs.

“I suppose you're old enough to know...” the larger dragon sighed, his pace slowing considerably. “Drahart is a country of dragon-slayers. It is the one country that even we dragons dare not bare our fangs against. 'Slayer' magic is... different from the magic I employ and the magic we are teaching you. All magic can kill, but slayer magic is designed to kill. But at a great cost...”

At this point in his explanation, we'd reached a settlement. It was a small town of brimstone and wood with a population in the hundreds at best. Although Jathir was flying low enough to be seen, there was no reaction from the townsfolk.

“If you use this magic and it succeeds, you are cursed to become what you kill,” my father continued while I observed the scenery below. “If you kill a dragon, you become the visage of the dragon you killed. Eventually, you will lose your sanity as the curse eats away at your body, mind, and soul. Drahart's king is one such individual whose sanity is on the verge of slipping, and the sorcerers of this land are brash enough to employ slayer magic without fear.” Jathir appeared to be lost in thought for a moment as he tried to figure out how to say what he wanted to say next. “...These people could be wiped out in a fortnight, but their relentlessness would mean our kind would not escape without damage. Gods forbid one of them gets a lucky shot in on one of other seven.”

My father sighed loudly as he began to pick up the pace again.

“We of the Supreme Octonary have an accord: If Drahart does not initiate aggression, do not engage.” Jathir's speed continued to increase as we progressed further into the country. “I think it was about twenty years ago that I just so happened to save the current leader's eldest son. It was not my intent to save him, nor did I care about his identity, but it worked out in our favor. As a favor, Drahart offered to establish diplomatic relations with us, and I was not so foolhardy as to ignore it. They offer us resources and Intel from lands I do not control, we come to their aid in the event of a siege from another country. Neither of us will bare arms against the other without provocation. When the throne abdicated to the heir, you will meet with them.”

It was an overload of information, but because my biology had been “reset” with my rebirth, in a sense, my brain was again at the age where it absorbs information most easily. Having kept all my knowledge and memories, it was no wonder I was considered a genius.

As we neared the edge of Drahart's territory, my father spoke up once again. A devious grin had returned to his face and there was a faint cackle behind every words.

“We're nearly there!” It was obvious he was trying hard to contain his excitement. “Soon you will meet them! The Divine Tetradrakes!”