
Enough

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The sores on Revath's neck had long since healed to faded scars. N'gis frowned as he ran a hand over the thickened tissue; half-smearred with wet sand, they were almost invisible, pale smudges against the dragon's already light hide. Most of the time he barely noticed them...today was different. He looked away, patting the dragon's shoulder to let the brown know the scrubbing was finished, and he could dip into deeper water to rinse. Revath sank below the surface and N'gis pulled away to avoid the undertow, heading for shore. Mindless of his damp skin, he put his trousers back on and sank down on the beach to dry off.

He closed his eyes, rubbing them with the heels of his hands, fingers in his hair. It had been months since they'd arrived in here in this future, now his present – months since his old home and life had been smashed away by a wall of water. And just because no one had thought too hard about F'geres and V'shel's ambitious plan to get the whole class to the Fort Gather, they'd all been awake and ready when the call to jump forward had come...

There had been more than just shock, when they'd come out of *between* from the first jump. Skia, his green firelizard, had been torn away with so many Turns, leaving a ragged emptiness behind. The loss had squeezed his chest like a slasher's claws, unexpected enough to bring tears he'd swiped away before landing. Compared to the thick touch of Revath's mind, Skia's little thread of life had always seemed somehow diminished, but her loss was like a wound inside. He didn't want to know how the loss of his dragon would compare. His own death became an almost secondary concern.

They'd arrived at Kadanzer, finally, and life had become a relieved blur of recovery. The melancholy of Skia's death had faded, its scars buried under the pressing need to readjust to the new time and place. Only today did they resurface in a pang of memory, prompted by one simple fact: today the readjustment period was over. His training was finished, his weyring class would divide into the fighting Wings. No longer merely assisting in Threadfall, they would become true fighting pairs, risking their lives for the sake of Pern and its people. Standing on the threshold, N'gis wasn't so sure he was ready to make the leap.

Revath, catching the drift of his rider's thoughts, broke into the reverie with unshakeable confidence. ***Fighting Thread is our purpose.***

I know, N'gis replied with a half-smile, fiddling with a sprig of dried beach grass. *But we'll be doing a lot more of it here than we would have back...* He couldn't say home...that home didn't exist anymore. *...at the old Weyr. I was looking forward to an early retirement at Pass' End, with nothing but clear skies for us if only we could make it that far. But Thread is going to fall for another forty years here. Forty years, Revath. I just don't think I can make it that long fearing for my life.*

You don't need to fear for your life, the dragon admonished sensibly. ***I will fly us through any 'Fall.***

N'gis knew that a concept as vague as fearing probability would be too much for his brown, and so refrained from speaking, restlessly twiddling the grass between his fingers. Revath was silent for a moment or two. He snorted under the water, filling the space above his muzzle with glittering bubbles, then lifted his head, shaking it free of droplets. A bit of seaweed clung to his nose. ***I don't understand why you are bothered. We have to fly 'Fall, that is what dragons and riders must do...do you wish you were not my rider?*** The brown sounded more than a little hurt.

No, N'gis said quickly, *of course not, you big lump. I wouldn't give you up for the world. This just...isn't the time and place I wish we could be. Faranth knows I can't wish us back to Southern, or wish we'd never left, because a tsunami is not exactly my choice way to go. But neither is a ball of Thread somewhere vital, a blast of flame from some fool wingrider, a never-ending vacation between, or losing you. And now, we'll be dodging those things for ages longer than we were supposed to, and for a bunch of people and places I barely recognize, even after half a Turn. I feel like I've jumped between with no coordinates, do you understand what I mean?*

No, Revath replied uncertainly, having understood few of his rider's references to the past.

N'gis mentally took a fortifying breath. Explaining and reiterating indistinct concepts or emotions to his brown was sometimes more trouble than it was worth, but perhaps discussing it would resolve the issue in his own mind. It had plagued the back of his thoughts for some time, all the more poignant now that he was on the verge of becoming a true dragonrider, a vague, unspeakable resentment towards this new present and its expectations. *All of a sudden we had a new home, a new life, a new future. Everything, new...everyone I used to know except for a sharding few, gone. People, places, names, everything changed from what we...I used to know. Seven months doesn't make this place my home, but now I'm expected to start risking my life for it all, and keep doing so for a long, long time?*

Kadanzer is our home, Revath disagreed, still sounding puzzled, as though they hadn't had this conversation more than once before. ***Why should we not fight to protect the place where we have food and females? What else is more important?***

'But that doesn't feel like enough. Not enough to fight for,' N'gis thought, shielding the sentiment from his lifemate. He gazed out across the glittering water, flicking the grass carelessly into the wind. 'Not enough to die for.'