

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. He knew, the way prey knows when the eyes of its own doom are open it.

Even Figment had never, ever, in his strange, magical life, conceived of any shade of black this horrid, this deep. Even the modest glow of the interior light withered slowly, dropping whole tones as they forced their way into the fully-corrupted world that was now Maleficent's home.

“It...is *unpleasant*,” Nestor murmured, an edge of 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'd never find out.”

Somehow, impossibly, it felt worse than before, when he had merely been running for his life.

“Where we...headin' to, F-Fig?” Mushu panted, stopping his fire-breathing a moment, to catch his breath. “Tell me it's close...”

“She's near,” Diablo said, plainly, seeming unconcerned with the liquid doom, right outside.

“All we need to do is make it 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. 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, turned, and opened the bag up.

“Right, here we go...”

One by one, lager 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 the darkness!”

That did it. For once, at long last, Diablo shut up. He recoiled back so fast, he nearly crashed into Mushu. Rotten as the bird was, deep-down, the 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; all he could do was silently apologize as the interior light sputtered 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 even 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 spluttered, 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?”

“Right...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 at least 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 plain of oak stretched out for miles, so large and wide across that every ridge, every natural divot in the grain was a slope, some even canyons. Through a far away 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 in 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, as Figment turned to see, the ship's nose had crashed into a large glass sphere, also atop the same gigantic table as it. A small hole had been smashed into the center-side, the ship embedded partially within—and, nearby, something was moving. It hopped up and down, arms swaying wildly, 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, his eyes intense. Figment nearly cried out again, seeing Cynder in the next one, Toothless in the one by her, and a larger Bartok, in the last. Beyond them were entire planets and stars, all plundered from regular-sized space, held captive. Had she stolen them, herself?

“Man, we're good,” Mushu chuckled, folding his massive red arms proudly. “Found 'em!”

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, as he jogged back over the ridges of wood grain, to talk with the others.

“I think I can get them all out, going one-by-one, and using portals in each! It shouldn't tax them very much, if it's between two 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 was difficult to do, with a beak.

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 his 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 the 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 his flaring nostrils. A vast sash of dark gold glimmered and sparkled as she bore it, like some empress of old, as she thudded nearer, taking up more and more 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 chest. **“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 ADMIT TO LIKING YOU...

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 perhaps 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 he slowed his growth, 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 vast head slowly, 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.”***

“That can't be right,” Figment balked, as the others hid behind him. “I...”

“YOU, WHAT? I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, FIGMENT, 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 let loose off her body.

“AT FIRST, THERE WAS NOTHING, A 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 there, 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 THE FORTRESS 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. THE MOMENT I HAVE TOTAL POWER, THOUGH...I COULD 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! He was there! Where was that 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 massive hallway. Out stepped Spyro, Cynder, Toothless and Bartok, all of them blown up to easily the size of the immense table, muscles heaving, eyes glowing a dark and awful lavender mist.

"I SUPPOSE YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOUR BELOVED ASSOCIATES, IF YOU WERE TO 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. Had this been a normal castle, any of the four dragons would have been comparable to a whole vehicle or king-sized bed.

"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 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, and 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 sighed 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 entire view overhead 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 on tight against 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 back off, Figment was easily as bulky, tall and proud as they were.

The group hug was instantaneous, deep, and long. 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, forcing their grips apart.

“Better!” Figment chirped, giving every one of them a hug, again.

“How'd you even 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-like, 'cept you. I guess Maleficent went an' 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, throbbing with 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 bellowed, hugging him in 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. Neither one of the seemed surprised.

“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, keeping 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 more new to the experience, a massive, awkward stuck to his muzzle, his eyes fluttering slightly from the afterglow of such mammoth growth.

“G...good to see you, Spyro!”

“He followed us,” Figment laughed, as Nestor made to shake Spyro's hand. Spyro broke in first, 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,” he hummed, making Nestor darken into an emerald 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 a moment, 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, clearing his throat. “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 some, 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.

“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, and nodded back.

“There we are, then.”

20.

The way down looked dark, and managed somehow to only get darker, the further they went. As they moved, each step seemed to swell larger, wider, becoming harder to traverse, until the next one had to be climbed down. The castle was growing—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 you
I'm stronger than her
She can't touch any of my friends
She can't do a thing to my brother*

The surging darkness of the stairwell slowly gave way to light, a ghastly, sickened green, that swelled into full glow as they entered into a vast, underground cavern, blazing with green fire on stone torches embedded in the walls. Up overhead was pure black, and at the end of the foul chamber...was Maleficent. Her thick arms were out on either side as she kept her back to them, chanting to a flowing wave of violet energy that moved in and out, trapped in a large ball, shuddering and twisting, as if alive and tortured. On either side of her were the Red Death, from Toothless's world, and poor Leon, both chained and silently being drained, both in a death-like sleep.

“YOU POOR DEAR,” she cooed, speaking to the energy itself, **“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. BUT, I WON'T LET YOUR NIGHTMARES COME FOR YOU, 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.

“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, I saw it myself, in the last world!”

“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 tighter, hotter, thicker. He opened his maw and exploded in size, his back bulk blowing up and 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, yet again, surging too wide, too big. Biceps as big as his entire torso erupted higher, stretching and groaning as his thighs expanded to match. He wobbled and caved 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 brawn and might. 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 widened some.

“I...FOUND YOU...BACK...” he boom-spoke, still shaking all over, before tensing in, moaning, and *doubling again*, in size.

Figment and company all came to a shocked stop, as the billowing bird bulged even larger than Maleficent, his now-godly 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 and snapping torches, as his head shoved higher 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! NOW, CEASE, AND 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 shoved bigger and stronger, throbbing so powerfully that his every breath 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 panted, catching his breath, as the tidal wall of dark plumage crept bigger and

bigger, towards them. “Guess he stopped her, before we could.”

“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, you say dat strange light up there, before all that,” 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 more and more of Maleficent's concentration went elsewhere. In moment,s 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, still, 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—

“Noooooooooooo...”

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 up even 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 FOOLS REALLY THINK...I'LL LET YOU HAVE HIM!?
I WILL NOT STAY TRAPPED HERE!”***

Hear heavy, bulbous rump shattered 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 blasting loose, letting her roar and swell on, unimpeded. Her huge arms burst through stairs and hallways, smashing walls apart, as her head burst through the warping, snapping rafters, her muzzle pushing up, 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, 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 to her scales as Maleficent opened her vast jaws, overhead, and began to furiously breathe in deep. Slowly but surely, a seemingly infinite amount of darkness arched and sank 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 nightmare stuff?”

“She's...absorbing it all!” Figment yelled back, as the maelstrom of evil energy stormed and whirled around their barrier. “But there...seemed to be so much of it, here! She must have grown strong enough to at least keep from being consumed by it, but still...”

“How does she expect to control it!?” Cynder asked, as the shaking only worsened.

“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 wide across.

Boom after echoing *boom* rode her growth spurt, as the inhaling behemoth swelled to a horrifyingly monstrous 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 all that time stranded 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 fattened and 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 crumbled into itself, as more and more of Maleficent grew bigger, atop it. Her vast weight sank in as her stomach blew up and out, 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 crumpled on itself, as the black dragoness shuddered hard and ballooned bigger than even it, by an escalating margin. Her rump blew out the other side, shoving the crushed core to powder, as her massive thighs heaved out on the other end, riding the deflating mass, until it too was utterly spent between her thighs.

“She's not stopping, Fig!” Spyro shouted, over the fury and roar of the surging dark. “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, already 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; were Figment and company each several miles tall (and likely, that was about right), then Maleficent was *thousands* of miles in size, conservatively speaking.

And that was by a 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 onto Maleficent’s vast scale, and began to pull in power. “I can at least try and take a sliver of her sIIIIII–”

In an instant there was so much Spyro that everyone was shoved tightly 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 within it. The barrier (and Spyro) inflated up to 10 miles, rumbled deeper, and blew up loudly to 30 miles...70 miles...210 miles...400 miles...600 miles!

“S-stop!” Cynder bellowed, trying to move some, 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 h Spyro groaned and snorted, trembled, and boomed uncontrollably up to 1,400 miles, quaking with pressure. 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 hideous command, as the other fed on and on, drawing in a hundred strands of the infinite nightmare around them, around her body. It flowed and stroked 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 the barrier.

Figment split his focus between the beam and expanding the barrier, so that Spyro's far greater girth was no longer crushing into him. Though the shielding held fast, he could see another head growing into view, high up beyond her colossal bosom, and that head belched another stream 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.

“Heh, y-you're welcome!”

“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-whomever 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 imagination should 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 together. Just as another vile head sprouted up beyond her chest, six flashes of light split open, and Spyro, Cynder, Toothless, Bartok, Mushu and Nestor all lunged out, glowing from their barriers.

“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, then spread his legs into a stance, and prepared himself to imagine the mother of all growth spurts; he could likely further distract her by surprising—

HELP

There it was, again, the voice. It rang through the chaos, crystal clear, and terribly sad.

“Who...who is that?” Figment asked, rightly so. “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 the heavens of 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, shoving and heaving over her massive neck and arms, as her cleavage dragged up along the brunt of one of Maleficent's necks, swelling heavier and fuller on either dimpling side. 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 tighter, and tighter, as Cynder billowed up to over 300 comparative miles, then 3,000, rocketing so much larger, in such a hurry, that her vision blurred for it.

“Holy s-smoooooooookes!” 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 and back, 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 billions of rock formations floating about 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 quite lost.

Her vicious laughter was cut short, however, as a burst of dark flame shot from a hole blown in the formation, which battered painfully against Maleficent's huge neck. She howled angrily, eyes glowing frighteningly brighter, as her body responded by ballooning twice as big, in one huge, gushing push of size. A clamp formed around Cynder's muzzle as she broke free of the rocks, but couldn't close over the barrier around her head.

“FIGMENT!”

Her voice was beyond angry; it was *volcanic*. It boomed out of one furious mouth, before the one next to it gulped down its share of nightmares, and continued on, 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 entire planets, shoving their partially-crumbled ruins aside, as her expansion became 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 entire mass of dragoness off center. She bellowed as her growing feet and toe claws swept 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 up towards her looming head, twirled, then fired a dozen shots right into her glowing eyes. Two other heads snapped to him, narrowing their eyes, and returning fire with two geysers 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 hotly up 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 huffed and boomed to 250,000 miles. “BIGGER!”

Mid-chant, Toothless finally noticed the moon bring 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, just as it crashed into him. It sailed all the way into another smaller planet, bashing 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 purple muscle.

“Some devil!” Mushu laughed, as he trembled all over, clenched his fists, and shot up to 900,000 miles, their bodies growing bulkier, taller and wider. “Ain't even a Sun as big as me! Lookit!”

“Looking good!” Spyro roared, before another barrier formed around him, which filled with water rapidly. “Whoa, what—”

Maleficent's heads sneered as water 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, fast. 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 sphere with his sheer 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. He would have put that *so* to shame! “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, hot 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 gravitate into his field of gravity, mere dots against his stretching body.

“Good grief, this is surreal,” he panted, trying to swat and shoo away the cloud around Mushu's bigger form, growing 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 in 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 made it just after his form, as his body rocketed up in size, exploding so fantastically gigantic that even Maleficent's many heads all yelped in shock. The thrown comrades thumped into Figment's growing chest, bouncing harmlessly off, as his raging 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 widened, 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 would 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. Just as Maleficent's vast body began to quake and spasm all over, as bolts of energy coursed through her trembling chest and hips, Figment made his own pile of candies, and brought them up 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 so, 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 all babbling and laughing, the payload of power wrecking her minds, as the rumbling grew more terrible.

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 phenomenal push 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.

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 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 the entire other half of the eaten 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, and 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 reach 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 growth. 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*.

“MIIIIIIIIINE,” they all hissed, in horrid 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 in 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, 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 felt what was wrong. 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 shall,” 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.

“Cant' 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 completely. My friends lent 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, thick 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 between, 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 takes 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 panted, 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, right before her tongue, and the candies all sailed into it uselessly, before it closed.

"Go ahead, use more energy up! You'll just wear yourself out faster."

A strange new 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 wheezing. ***"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 ME...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 quaking fearfully, as Figment opened his mouth to roar, but instead, simply *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 growing portals all around Maleficent swelled too big.

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 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.

*I'M ALRIGHT
I'LL MANAGE
I'M...GOING TO B-BURST*

No amount of imagination could help what his panicking body saw as an inevitable thing. 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, mere motes now. 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 roared, finally, and the sound, 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 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.

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, as Figment understood it, 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 and stabbed 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 big...

"I feel like I know you, too, hah," the voice sang, getting younger, 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 ultra-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, then! 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, 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, 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."

"Surely, you tried to go back?"

Red Figment started 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, my friend. I finally had reached a power height 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, on 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. Yes. 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 for me 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 once 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 cosmos. My energy overwhelmed a pocket of reality, subsumed it. I became a cosmic entity. Imagine that! Or, rather, don't. Sorry. It 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, darling,” 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 awhile. Eventually, all I had left was my 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...”

“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 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?"

"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 imagined 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?"

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 handle, 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 getting' 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 his 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 thoroughly. "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 its 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 the ocean, 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 remained 5 miles tall, being a small island of fur and scales, it made sense enough. She was actually bigger than Figment, several 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 made, gladly, and as the pokemon world began to heal, as Dragonite and Lucario finally got Leon to open up, and as Anders found 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 it to 'even'. She lamented that Ludmilla was still out there, causing havoc, but Figment brushed the matter off, saying that they were headed there, after Toothless returned to his world. Toothless, himself, opted out of such a tack, preferring to keep on traveling.

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 6-mile tall behemoth demanded that they stay for tea, as the entire ordeal had given him a great idea for a lengthy sonnet, and, also, 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 doting 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. No argument was made of it, 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 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.

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 other 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.

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, 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.

“Go on, git, already,” Spyro 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 in together, quiet.

“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 quietly settled 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 deep. 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 flickered, 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, my lad?”

“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.

However, certain needs bore out, and up the inventor finally went.

He rounded the library, making a line to the kitchen, where a small purple dragon humbly sat, in his wooden chair, sipping 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 hung, 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 Figment, growing up!”

“Imagine that,” Figment replied, all smiles.