

5.

"Of all the humiliatin', no-goodin', low-downin', not-right gyps..."

There was a rustling, within the dense forest; to call it a full-on disturbance would have been a monumental act of generosity. The only disturbed thing around was what stormed petulantly out from a small bush, far below the canopy (and, honestly, even that meager entrance had taken a little work). It bore the appearance of some majestic Eastern dragon, if that dragon had been left in the sauna a few weeks too long. Thin, lank and long, he nearly came off as a red-bodied ribbon caught in the breeze, a yellow-gold stripe running the vertices of his belly and tail. A darker nub formed his nose, gold whiskers trailing out past, with pitch-tipped ears and a set of stubby blue horns atop his head. All told, he just wasn't much to tell about, and *that* fact sure had him talking.

"Incense-burner?" the diminutive creature continued, eyes to the ground. He kicked a pebble, and the pebble kicked back, making him rub his toes sourly. "Whoever heard of a dragon bein' a lighter? That ain't a way to treat anything, 'specially a dragon! Which I am!"

No one answered, so he replied to himself:

"Oh, but Mushu, you ain't a real dragon! No, no! You let *one* Fa warrior down, and he gets a little decapitated, and oh, here it comes! Here-it-comes! The insults! From the whole Fa family, even! *Not a real dragon!?* That's some hurtful dialogue! What am I supposed to do wit' that? Don't they know I'm the victim, here? Fa Deng, he dead! Boop! I gotta *live* with this!"

The bite-sized dragon circled and fumed, not quite done with being mad. If anything, his anger was in a comfortable place, and if he had to bear it, at least he could enjoy being on a roll:

"Wasn't even my fault! I can't be guardin' the Fa members every second! The ancestors, *they* sure can't do it, cause they got *me* on the job...which I was doin'! Puh! Havin' a dragon, a *real*, genuine, mighty dragon, lightin' incense...I ain't havin' it! *I ain't havin' it!*"

He yelled the last part out into the forest, knowing he was far enough away that the ancient spirits of the Fa house wouldn't actually hear it. He was mad, not stupid. Finally, Mushu's circling drew in on itself, until he was all-but spinning in place, and he took a seat on a small rock, sighed, and remained there.

"I gotta impress 'em," he said, at length, nodding slowly. "Gotta let 'em see I still got it. Then they'd being me back in, for real. Then they'd be sorry! Just...gotta think up somethin' great, somethin'...big...real, *real* b—"

The impact that interrupted shook the entire forest, putting the formerly-indifferent trees on a mean wobble, overhead. Vibrations tore through him, through the rock, through the ground, leaving Mushu with perked-out ears and terribly wide eyes.

"W-what the..."

Scuttling up a tree, Mushu got a better look out beyond the forest, and his jaw went slack.

The very moment Figment landed in the new world, he checked everything. As prodigious a size as the little dragon had blown up to prior, he now found himself fairly comparable to the surrounding forests and hills. The dense canopies rested at about belly-height, putting him down to perhaps one hundred feet, sitting (which, he found, he was). At a full stand, he guessed at maybe 180 feet—not bad, overall!

Next up: the party. He dusted himself off, surveyed the landscape for his friends, and found them both, poleaxed among the forests, laying asleep on a bed of emerald flora and soft earth. A heavy sigh escaped as Figment grinned, and finally relaxed a little.

"Good, good," he chirped, trying in the moment of respite to pop his gigantic back. "Ngh, just...need to figure out where...we are! I...oh, delightful! No more bruising! That's useful to know!"

Spyro and Cynder had been taxed down to a more reasonable level of *gigantic*, as well; Figment guessed him at about three hundred feet, still absolutely packed with tight muscle. Cynder was perhaps two hundred and fifty, say, and her hips, rump and gargantuan chest had kept their healthy proportions. He caught himself staring just one beat past comfort, and cleared his throat.

"Well, it does seem peaceful, here," he murmured, as he patted himself over, and finally realized that the bag was still intact, on him. Figuring there was less urgency and more time to do so, he opened the mutually-gigantic top flap, and checked on the pile of candies within. He nodded, smiling, before blinking, and checking again. "My word!"

He pulled one relatively-normal, huge candy up, examining it between two fingers. His eyes hadn't been playing tricks—the blue piece he held was no long completely blue, but rather, a swirl of partially-combined blue and red! The others looked similar, too, on a better look!

"Amazing! Did going through the portal...combine their properties? I mean, they didn't change earlier...was it due to going through multiple portals, perhaps? How very curious!"

"W-what is?" a heavy voice rumbled behind him, prompting Figment to turn around and face a waking Spyro. He let off a massive, toothy yawn, rolling his shoulders powerfully, as Figment approached, candy demonstrably outstretched in his claws.

"Spyro, look!" Figment answered, as the bigger dragon sat up heavily. "The candy! See that swirl? Well, I think going through a chain of portals did something to combine them! For all we know, that might mean their effects have combined together!"

At that, Spyro woke in full, as if struck with a bolt of energy.

"You're kidding! What is that, red and blue? What's red do?"

"It's what allowed Maleficent to take Figment's size earlier," Cynder groaned, stretching deep as she sat up and shook her head, her chest bouncing slightly. "That's an *especially* dangerous color!"

"Hey," both males happily said, on sight of her.

"Any idea where we are, Figment?" she followed up, before Spyro could insist on trying one.

"Not specifically," he mused, looking up at the mountains and waterfalls stretching up through faraway mists. "Though from Blair's books in the library, I would hazard it to be similar to the far East, perhaps Taiwan, the French protectorate of Cambodia...or Indochina, or even China itself.."

"I don't see anyone around," Cynder replied, standing up to full height, sending broken bits of canopy and wood tumbling down several hundred feet, her massive paws vanishing within the trees around them. "But it doesn't sound like your London."

"Or our realm," Spyro huffed, standing slightly higher than either of them. Once again, in the more affordable setting, Cynder found herself glancing over Spyro's godly bulk, stealing flashes of corded, hulking muscle and thick, swollen pecs. "I know you're figuring out how to summon these portals, but any chance you're understanding how to summon the ones you want?"

"I've been thinking about it, yes," Figment said, nodding with a surprising enthusiasm. "I keep imagining landing back home, yet that hasn't happened, at all. Either it will come with practice, or it...may be beyond me. The only way to find out is to keep trying, really."

Instead of being disheartened, Spyro snorted, then grinned, slapping his huge hands together authoritatively.

"Right! Are you feeling up to opening another one, then?"

"Well, I *think* so," Figment mumbled, rubbing his chin. "Last time, we couldn't just up and leave...but things do seem quiet here, and I suppose nothing is stopping us from it..."

"What's on your mind?" Cynder asked.

"I haven't had time enough to understand one thing," Figment sighed, narrowing his eyes. "I have no idea if there's any methodology to our itinerary."

"Our *what*, now?" Spyro balked, not bothering to pretend at keeping up.

"The path we're on. I can't figure out if there's a reason for the order we're traveling in, or if it's purely random. If the latter, then I suppose we could hop about, willy-nilly...but if there's some greater purpose, it would suggest that each world has a point...not only for appearing at all, but for *when* it appears."

"If you're thinking this world is important, and we have to stop and find a meaning or goal to each and every one, this could take forever and a day," Cynder countered, gently. "It could be that each way-point is that, a hub. Some may prove more important than others. Besides, do you really think there's some greater force at work, in all this? Didn't you start the chain, yourself?"

"Heh, I suppose I did," Figment chuckled, blushing. "And certainly, nothing from around here seems to be intruding on the very-conspicuous sight of three giants in committee. You may be right, it's probably safe to just move on, and save time. I'll keep thinking of home, throughout, of course."

The other two dragons nodded, content on the consensus. Spyro made a gesture with a hand.

"Hey, we're with you, there. Let's get moving, if nothing's going on here. I'm fine with a place being peaceful, and lacking murderous lunatics and evil birds, I'm happy to move along peacefully."

"Seconded," Figment added, turning to face away from them. He worked up his focus, closing his eyes, as the rest of the party watched in fascination. That fascination tumbled into a limp quiet, as a minute passed by, and nothing happened.

"Uh," Spyro started.

"Heh, still a bit drained, from that many portals, I imagine," Figment admitted.

"Well, don't put it *that* way, or you'll end up being right," Cynder offered. "Why don't we just give you a minute or two to rest?"

"Yeah, imagine you're all better," Spyro added, grinning. Instead of Cynder chiding or correcting, this time, both of them looked expectantly to Figment, who shrugged.

"I'm...all better," he said. Even he adopted the same look, as though waiting for an answer from himself. With no real change, he tried again, more confidently: "I'm all better!"

He felt the candy bag shift for a moment, but nothing else. Perhaps he had moved more than he thought, in his efforts.

"Try it now!" Spyro said, rubbing his humanoid hands together. "I bet that did it."

"Right!"

Again, Figment closed his eyes, and put everything he had into it. This time, a portal did indeed flash forth, widening and stretching larger and larger, getting closer to their towering sizes. Cynder started forward, ready as anyone else to depart, but it was Spyro that stopped her.

"Look," he murmured, not wanting to startle Figment. Cynder stared with him into the portal, and gasped. Where other portals had simply been discs of energy, this time...this time, a translucent image began to sputter into focus, and what sputtered into focus was what commanded Spyro's full attention. "See that?"

"I do! Is he...focusing on a specific place? Successfully?"

"It's more than that," Spyro said, beaming. "Look! It's home! He's doing it!"

"Ah," Figment hissed, his eyes still closed, as the image started to fade off, leaving only the vague and indeterminate swirl of energy. "I...gah, I felt something, for a minute..."

By the time both of them were by Figment's side, though the portal remained, all trace of their home world had faded. Spyro cut Cynder a quick look of worry, and found her hand on his huge shoulder, giving it a light squeeze, before Figment opened his eyes.

"Oh, good! I thought I had lost it! Are you ready to leave?"

"Yeah," Spyro answered, forcing a smile. "Yeah, let's git."

Cynder patted Spyro one last pat of reassurance that he'd done right by not fussing; after all, even Spyro had quickly concluded that they could fill Figment in, after successfully jumping. He rallied in record time, and with that, all three stepped through, leaving the old world to the same quiet in which they had found it.

6.

Foolishly, some part of Spyro had kept enough of the notion that they would still arrive in his world around to play with, as they traveled between worlds—not that the trip was a long one. What awaited the trio of giants was, in fact, not his world at all. It was immediately a foreign one, and this time hiding his dejection was impossible.

"Ah, we had it," Spyro huffed, standing up to a newly-taxed height of 150 feet. The buildings around them were a helpful unit of measurement, given how the rooftops of old-world inns rose up to about his shins. "We were so close!"

"Close?" he heard, as Figment approached, standing at about 90 feet tall. The smaller giant looked around here and there, already processing. "Close to what?"

"We might want to talk elsewhere, you two," a 120-foot tall Cynder suggested as, at their still-impressive heights, it took a moment to properly hear it; a moment's focus changed all that.

"Dragons!" one voice shouted, rising above the ruckus down below. A few others followed:

"Everyone, run!"

"There was more than one of them!?"

"Help!"

"Foul beasts—"

"Fetch the knight—"

"Ah, yeah, we just might," Spyro gulped, as small stones began to pelt pointlessly at his thick muscles and stretched-out scales. "Sorry! Sorry, everyone!"

"Y-yes, apologies," Figment stammered, blushing high up overhead. "Entirely our mistake, we'll b-be on our way!"

"Pardon," Cynder started, not bothering with whatever the rest could have eventually been. Instead, she pushed onward, nudging into both males with a single breast colliding, then pressing into each of their backsides. It did what it needed, and both parties jolted ahead, plate-eyed. Feet narrowly missed buildings, fleeing villagers, and each other, the shuffle forward as awkward as possible.

The pelting continued, though even the little humans below really should have known it was purely academic. Some very determined soul down there managed to hurl a barrel, and while it hardly

hurt, Spyro felt inclined to acknowledge it with a fake *ouch*, out of respect. The anger and fear and general fuss managed to dog them all the way along, down the side road, out into what likely was the business district, past wobbling shops and tents, all the way to a surprisingly high wall, which they took turns helping on another over (as going through that tiny gate was a no-go).

While some damage was wrought on the stone wall, in the climbing, all Figment could think to do to mollify it was to turn back to the jeering crowd on their side, wave, and smile weakly.

"Lovely place," he offered, as a flaming arrow finally whizzed by, making him yelp.

"So, first observation," Spyro sighed, trying to sound as composed and sharp as he could. "They have a dragon of their own, here. And it is *not* liked."

"It is kind of a running theme, now that you mention it, with dragons," Cynder added, as the party thudded far off enough that the boos and hisses subsided, leaving the sounds of nature and heavy footfall to fill the gap. "I mean, aside from that last world. That had nothing going on."

"Other dragons being around shouldn't have much to do with our purpose, which is to get home," Figment said, looking up somewhat to the larger giants. Truth be told (or rather, remembered), it had been a bit of thrill, looming over even them. Ah, well. *There was always more candy.*

"Home," Spyro said, more slowly and deliberately than Figment would have expected. By the time he heavily thumped about to look back, the two dragons were looking both excited and tense at once. "Figment, I was going to tell you once we arrived, but...when you were imagining up a portal, earlier...for a moment, we could see more than just energy, in the portal! We saw our home!"

Had he paid more attention, Spyro might have caught sight of how Cynder flushed darkly at his choice of the word *our*.

"Unbelievable," Figment murmured, awestruck. "It did? I really conjured a specific location?"

"Well, for a moment, yes," Cynder replied. "I think you're getting stronger, and rapidly!"

"Goodness!" Figment laughed, flapping his tinier wings with poorly restrained glee. "I must not have been able to hold it, then. With more practice...I could try again! I think I'm up for it, and I don't see any reason to stay in a world where dragons are hardly popular..."

"The candy," Spyro cut in, staring.

"Oh, it's with me, see?" Figment chuckled, pointing to the bag strapped against his belly.

"No, no, Fig, I mean, *the candy!*"

Down below, rolling meekly away from Figment's shack-sized foot, was a single gigantic candy, caught mid-jailbreak. Figment gawked, then quickly scooped it back up and investigated the underside of the bag. Sure (and horribly) enough, somehow, a decent-sized hole was set in the bottom left corner, and another two candies had mercifully bunched against it from within, preventing any others from falling out—so long as Figment didn't move.

"How in the world—it's a hole," Figment stammered, flustered. "But...we didn't do anything to tear it, did we? Lord, you don't think that...during Maleficent..."

"No way, they would have been falling out, back in the last world," Spyro said. "This must have just happened, now."

"It looks...*chewed* through!?" Figment balked, increasingly unnerved. "Something was in here! That's the only...see, it chewed out from within, look at the direction of the fraying! Oh, no..."

"What? You don't think something got away...with a candy?" Cynder gulped.

"If so, I think we'd have seen the culprit blowing up to size, by now," Spyro added, snorting. "We should just get going, yeah?"

"But, the hole," Figment grumbled, furrowing his troubled brow. "We can't just skip off, with it leaking candies all about, it would sow chaos! Chaos!"

"Okay, okay," Cynder started, looking around, "we'll...just have to patch it up!"

"With what?" Spyro asked. "You got any giant-sized thread or needles in that bag, Fig?"

"Just the candies...we could try jumping worlds, and I cover the hole with my hand, only...it is a bit difficult to control movement, when spinning around between realities...plus, if my hand moves during the taxing size shift, it could mean we leak candies that way, too. Worse, the hole could widen."

"Gah, it's always something," Spyro huffed, rolling his incredibly thick neck. "I don't suppose anybody back in town has enough rope and needles to thread a bag this big..."

"A dragon tends to be bigger," Cynder replied, at length. "If it's a menace here, it must be plus-sized enough. Maybe...maybe it has something properly-sized, that can fix the bag?"

"I could just uproot some thick tree leaves, and maybe pad the hole...only, if we move around as much as usual, on jumping, it might still be bad enough to rustle them away..."

"Appreciate the thought, Figment, but we should probably just go find the dragon," Spyro sighed, shrugging enormously huge shoulders, making his pectorals and biceps bob heavily, on the way back down. "Time's wasting!"

Figment rubbed his horns with both hands, then worriedly put one hand back down under the bag. Once again, he clutched it from underneath, hugged it up tight against his huge scaly belly, and followed along as Spyro and Cynder set off into the forests.

"Holy Fa, was that close," Mushu panted, resting at last against the boulder-sized ball of swirling colors. Rolling it down the hill seemed like the fastest way to avoid detection from those three gigantic beasts...but staggering a moving boulder was impossible for something his size, so he had been 'wise' enough to let it crash into the surrounding woodlands, on its own. "No way I'd have made myself big enough, 'fore all three-them could have whopped me flat. But enough of that noise! Haha! Yes, yes, you come here to Papa!"

He patted the gigantic candy, deep dark green and rich gold all about, hugging up into it as it rested between two crushed trees. His tiny tail whipped all about as he slid back off, grinned toothily, then...sighed.

"...Eh. So, uh, how...how do I eat this thing? I mean, piece by piece, oughta do..."

He wasted no time in chipping away at a crack in the side, where it had crashed against the felled tree on the right. Thankfully, picking with his little claws at the cracks, a small chunk did eventually tumble out, still big enough to fill his hands as it landed. Most of what those freaks had been spouting didn't make a lick of sense to him, but he had certainly figured out what counted: these things were candy-treats—and they made you *big*. That had been more than enough to get him into that oversized bag.

"Dragons tend to be *bigger*, huh?" Mushu grouched, mock-repeating what he had heard that chesty giantess-dragon saying. "Then I'm 'bout to show y'all a *real-real* dragon!"

He bit down into the chunk, nearly shoving it up whole into his mouth at the same moment. Swallowing proved more difficult than getting the candy, in the first place—but, in for a penny, in for a pound. That there was no way to get it back out of his throat may have also contributed.

The exhaustion of simply getting it down was replaced immediately, any fatigue or weakness blasted away in a sudden and eruptive burst of energy—no, *power!*

Mushu's tiny body managed two simultaneous feats: his little body blew out with a sudden herd of muscles, all of which swelled into a red-gold crowd, his shoulders ballooning up along his thickening neck, his pectorals pushing his scales out head of him. At the same moment, his swelling arms pushed out, defining somewhat, growing more human-like. His chest pinched up more clearly over the bulge of his torso, as a row of hard abdominal mounds pushed eagerly out. His words caught in his growing throat as his rear bunched out under his fattening tail, his knees wobbling as his thighs blew out, and his little calves bulked up under them, on a slight delay.

"Ah," was about all he got out as his eyes closed, his back popping from its usual insistent 'S' shape, into a taller, straighter, slighter curvature, and in the elapsing seconds, he had come to stand like any grown man might. As he did, more importantly, he *grew*.

One blink, and Mushu stood a whole two feet in height, enough to make him pitch for balance as his muscles outpaced him steadily. He blinked again, and saw the bushes that once towered over him lowering submissively, yielding, as he rose higher than them, and higher still. Three feet trembled and tickled its way to four, then five, and Mushu's clawed little feet dug into the soil, in abject joy.

"Huh...h...hah," he finally managed, one gasping laugh escaping, before he closed his eyes again and started to rumble even more, from even deeper, "Hah! Wahahaha, yessss!"

By the time he stopped growing, the lingering afterglow of electric power proved enough to leave him giddy. This did not diminish, especially when he looked his seven-foot tall body over. His clawed red hands remained, attached to a bulky, powerful arm, and there was no way he could resist flexing it, just to see the peak of a newly-formed bicep.

"Oh...oh, yeah," he crowed, his thickened tail lashing and curling in delight. "Haha! Now this! Y'see, this, here! That is more like it! Who's lookin' very dragon, today? Oh, is it me? Well, I thought so, thank you for noticin'! And I—would you look at these!"

He finally saw his pectorals, each one twitching at his attention.

"I can't even see past these!"

He poked one huge pectoral, testing, and it swelled out tighter, heftier, proud and huge, and his powerful tail went from whipping to *hurricane*.

"Man, I could left Fa Deng right over my head! Head included! I'm bigger than an army strongman! Oh, you want attention, too?"

He flexed both hulking biceps, and laughed stupidly as they seemed to stretch tighter, yet, peaking even higher. His red lats flared enviously, and at last, Mushu just couldn't contain his joy.

"Ahahaha! I finally look as good as I knew I was! And oh...oh, we're just gettin' started!"

He turned back to the candy, still looming larger than him. This temporary fact did nothing to dull his smile, as he made a tight fist, reared back, and punched the boulder-sized orb, *hard*. Even without having thought to attack the cracks on the side, it made no difference. A confused web of cracks shot out from the impact point, and the entire front half of the candy exploded apart, cracking into numerous bits.

"Whoo! Ooh, all of you, you come here! Come here! I got enough attention for all y'all!"

Chunks that moments ago would have needed both arms, he now held in clusters, in each hand, and each hand shoved those clusters into his mouth as he ate, and ate, and ate. Mushu sat hunched over his own inflated bulk, giddily feeding, already feeling it happen: as he gorged, his huge back muscles trembled and swelled out with renewed pressure, bloating higher and wider overhead, forcing the arch of his back to bulge higher. His shoulders boomed out, growing from comparative pumpkins to outright boulders of their own, as his pectorals crowded uncomfortably bigger, inflating loudly, swelling tighter as they billowed into each other, caged by his swelling red biceps and triceps.

Little dragon

The sneering disdain of the family spirits returned, and the twenty-foot tall Mushu ate even faster, spitefully gulping bigger and bigger pieces of candy down. His scaly thighs burst twice as thick on either side as he stayed crouched, starting to compete for space with his bulging calves and swelling feet, as his back muscles boomed even greater overhead. His tail sprouted out behind him, longer and stronger and fatter, as his neck doubled in width.

Not a REAL dragon

His ruby shoulder blades heaved massively as he ballooned up past forty feet, then fifty, his monstrous back muscles pushing into whole trees, throbbing bigger still, shoving angrily into them, until limbs cracked and snapped away. At eighty feet, his hunched back and shoulders and biceps all began to forcibly push entire trees back, uprooting them as he snorted and ate faster.

You're nothing but a lighter!

Though he had made that last one up, it felt close enough to base to keep him shoveling every broken bit of candy into his growing maw; a hand big enough to grab and hold a horse like a toy clutched at the rest of the boulder-candy, and he crammed the whole remainder into his mouth. With a last gulp, the hunched mass of red scales and muscles trembled and shook, tightening in on itself, rumbling terribly...before rocketing *bigger!*

A massive swell of bulk blew up through even the highest of old treetops, quaking and twitching, before inflating further out, the bulky 200-foot behemoth of a dragon erupting hotly to 250 feet, then 280! Mushu groaned down into his yellow pectorals, feeling them boom up bigger against his chin, smothering up larger and tighter against his muzzle as he rumbled and grew even larger, still.

When he finally stood up, balancing upon vast, swollen legs, Mushu threw his chest out, colossal arms back and bellowed a booming cackle of complete victory, carelessly shaking the landscape underneath.

"YES!"

His voice was a cannon blast, pure thunder. He was so powerful even his words shook his mighty neck, as they echoed out through the air:

"HAH! HOW'S THIS FOR REAL!? JUST Y'ALL LOOK! YEAH, LOOK!"

He took his own advice and checked his body over, beyond elated. He stood over four-hundred and fifty feet tall, and had more muscles than he could begin to count! Even relaxed as he could be, his biceps remained massive and pumped, his thighs heaving and ready for use. Even the base of his tail felt enormous as it rested atop his rear, like have a great oak attached to it. It was not unwelcome.

"NOW," Mushu huffed, dusting his massive hands, "JUST GOTTA PULL OFF SOME SORTA FEAT, SOMETHIN' REAL MIGHTY-LIKE..."

His huge ears perked rather cutely, despite his new size and bulk.

"HEY, YEAH...ALL THOSE VOICES SHOUTIN' AT THEM, EARLIER...THEY GOT A *DRAGON* PROBLEM...I BET I COULD DO THE WHOLE HERO-THING, AND BRING ME SOME HONOR! AN EMBARRASSMENT OF HONOR! OHO, MUSHU, YOU LITTLE...YOU GREAT, BIG GENIUS!"

Given how the three giants hadn't all stormed over to investigate the fuss he had created, Mushu was plenty-sure they had already gone off looking for the dragon, too. At their size, they didn't exactly have indoor voices, so he had still heard what he needed to, even as he had been escaping.

"ALL I GOTTA DO IS FOLLOW THEM, AND POW, I CLEAN UP! HERO-DRAGON MUSHU, PRIDE OF THE FA CLAN! SHOOT, THE PRIDE OF CHINA! HAH!"

Sure, the stray villager or traveling merchant or grazing livestock or laboring serfs might have caught sight of him as he thudded and thoomed his way along, each foot bigger than an Inn. Mushu knew. If anything, it just made him prouder, not noticing the way his entirety continued to swell...

"Do you two hear that?" Cynder asked, finally, glancing back at her comrades.

"Yeah, I thought it was just me," Spyro chuckled, looking around quizzically.

"It sounds like...singing," Figment added. "It's pretty good, too."

The trio had made tracks along the lower valley, beyond what seemed to be the kingdom, and had found themselves in a much more open one, all hills and dales and unspoiled green plains. Rock faces rose and played in the ocean of grass, far off, and from behind one of them, near a wide, winding stream, they could hear it. Someone was indeed singing, a large, powerful falsetto, if one were to believe it. Cynder spoke up first:

"I think it's by the stream...I don't think a little human could manage that volume, so...what do we do? If it's the dragon, do we just walk up and introduce ourselves?"

"Seems the polite way to do it," Figment agreed, already marching off towards the sound.

"I didn't mean right away," she moaned, as Spyro shrugged, and followed after.

Even having been reduced in size, several times, they were still towering giants, and the ninety-foot tall Figment was duly reminded, the moment he rounded a tall ridge among the hills, and found himself looking down at a fully-grown dragon. This particular specimen must have been about twenty feet tall, tops, big enough to shower in a small lake formed by the runoff from a waterfall riding the ridge. A sort of off-green body met a swath of yellow belly and neck scales, a slender muzzle pushing out as the pear-shaped dragon sang away, unimpeded. Two dark-green tufts jutted from his head, swaying in time with the tones of his song, like metronome hands. The singing was certainly from him, but that was about the only answer Figment had to work with. For everything else, there were only questions:

***This** is what the villagers feared and loathed?*

How would he interrupt, in the most polite way?

Was that him shifting into a soprano, just now?

"Ah," Figment started, clearing his throat. The smaller dragon continued on, not noticing, too caught up in pantomiming some violin solo with his own spade-tipped tail. "Beg pardon...hello?"

The dragon's head bobbed and swayed, lost in rapt gusto, before it swayed further out on his long neck; his eyes opened—then opened wide.

"H-heavens!" he bellowed, fudging the last note. In an instant, the tail had gone from violin to shield, as he hugged it into himself. He looked out from his shower at a massive pink-ish wall of belly scales, then craned his sights up, up, up to Figment's smiling muzzle. "HEAVENS, ME!"

"Afternoon, friend!" Figment chirped, blushing darkly. "I ah, h-heard your singing, and—"

"Gracious, all," the dragon hollered, unblinking, absently letting the waterfall splash over his head. "A g-giant! A dragon! A giant dragon! I-I didn't know they came quite so big, goodness! I, well...ah, heavens—d-do you mind!"

A hint of indignation crested his shock, his voice high-pitched and affected, bordering on effeminate. To Figment, it actually seemed to fit him quite well. The smaller dragon pivoted away, eyes closed, chin up; he put his arm out and swirled a circle with his finger, insistent.

"OH!" Figment gasped, thudding heavily on the grass as he turned about. "T-terribly sorry!"

"Yes, yes," he heard the dragon brusquely chatter, as it easily walked out of the lake, and over behind a high crowd of rocks. "No need to apologize, no need. Simply a shock, is all it is! Goodness, my heart! You must excuse me in kind, I should say. I must say! Oh, to see..."

He peeked back out from the rock face, having finished rubbing himself dry with his tail.

"Ah, it's quite alright, do turn about!"

Figment was still blushing, as he did so, an awkward grin incorrectly stuccoed to his face as he began to reply:

"Yes, well, we aren't from—"

"...one so tall as yourself, around here! Oh, I say, I get no company, here, none at all! My, you hardly seem full-grown, at that! Isn't that everything!"

The dragon strolled up on surprisingly light feet, coming up to only Figment's lower belly, at best. As he did so, Figment felt the approaching tremors of Spyro and Cynder as they appeared on the other side of the ridge, looming even larger than he.

"Ah, my friends and I—"

"Oh, you must be famished," the dragon clucked, smiling wide already. "I say, I'm not at all certain you would fit terribly well inside, but I do have a cave right there, very nice one, should you care to—AH!"

As the dragon spoke, he turned to point to a fairly large cave opening, nearby, upon the rise of the hill; that was when he noticed the two far larger, thicker dragons, on the opposing side of him, looming casually. Figment tried to bridge the gap.

"These are my—"

"MERCIFUL HEAVENS!" the dragon cried, hands to his head. "A gaggle, no less!"

"Hey," Spyro said, waving a massive hand cheerfully, and pointing to himself. "Spyro. This's Cynder. That's Figment. What's your name?"

The dragon sort of stopped everything, locked into a defensive stance, up on tiptoe, on one foot. He regarded Spyro, looking him over, then Cynder, then back a moment longer to Spyro.

"C-charmed," he sighed, eyes narrowing. A moment longer, and he began to slip back down onto both feet. "A p-pleasure."

"Likewise," Cynder added, quickly. "We're so sorry to impose, but...we're travelers, and we need a moment of assistance, if you would be so kind. Figment, here...that large bag he's toting with him, it has a hole, and we cant have it leaking contents as we travel..."

"I should think not," the dragon said, nodding.

"We're wondering, do you perhaps have anything that can be used to mend it?" Figment asked, leaning down closer, in an attempt to hopefully appear less imposing. He showed the dragon the hole, and the dragon looked it over, seriously. He clapped his yellow-palmed hands together and beamed, the tufts on his head perking high.

"My dear boy, I do! Not to boast, but I do fancy myself a bit of a craftsman! And a poet, no less. Yes, come, come. My cave is where I said, do follow! You know, it is rather a nicety, having company! Oh, I could host again! My, yes! Do come!"

"He seems nice," Cynder offered, cocking her head some.

"Works for me, if he's got food," Spyro rumbled, grinning. "Haven't eaten anything for awhile, now, come to think of it."

"You're right, we haven't," Figment wondered aloud, as they trailed along behind the dragon. "Aside from the candies, I mean."

Given that the opening to the dragon's cave stood about fifty feet high, Figment was the only one capable of fitting inside it—barely. He had to squeeze in, while holding his breath, which jostled the candy bag something fierce. Several candies cracked from the force of being ground against the sides of the aperture, and though Figment found the interior to be much higher and roomier, he still had to crouch some as he entered. In so doing, the oblivious traveler swung about slightly, not realizing that several chunks of candy slid loose from the hole, tumbling into a large cauldron full of liquid set over a fire, warming a cozy hearth. Immediately, the large chunks dissolved, melting into the mixture from sheer heat.

"It's a lovely place," Figment said, as the dragon bustled about in what seemed to be a pantry. He tried to take as unimposing a seat as he could, there by the warm fire, as the dragon reappeared, promptly setting a long wooden table with sandwiches and fruits and several good-looking cakes. "Thank you for having us!"

"Oh, no, no, don't bother mention, my boy," the dragon chuckled, blatantly delighted. "What sort of dragon doesn't parlay with the universal language of hospitality? Second to music, second to poetry, yes! Ho ho!"

"Well—"

"And certainly don't you worry for your great big friends! Oh, how lovely! Haha, I'll have food right out to the both of them, as well, of course!"

"Thank you!" Spyro rumbled, from outside, the sounds of his thick tail beating the ground making the dragon laugh. Well, it was somewhere between a laugh and a high-grade titter.

"Of course, of *course*, all my pleasure, really!"

As soon as the table was set, Figment cleared his throat and motioned to the bag, smiling.

"As to the bag, if I can mention--"

"I've just the very thing, my boy!" the dragon chuckled, almost chiding, as though graciously choosing to undercut the implication that a host as good as himself had forgotten. He vanished around a corner, then returned, using the firelight to show a large femur, snapped into a fine needle point, and polished down smooth. A length of rope threaded down past it, into a coil that the dragon held in the other hand. For his size, it roughly equaled a humble needle and line.

"Oh, a bone," Figment nodded. "Very clever, using prey to double as a tool!"

"Prey?"

The dragon bore a bit of a soured look, before shaking his head with a very clear series of *tsks*.

"Really, now! Such a barbarous notion, I won't have it! You see, these nasty things were cluttering my cavern, when I first made it a home. Terrible business, so morbid. Gracious Saints, I would never, dear me, no. Now, do hand that bag here, boy, quickly. Observe!"

The enthusiasm crept back in as Figment offered the huge bag over, setting it down near the dinner table. Spyro and Cynder's huge muzzles crept into view, as well, as the both of them watched from outside of the entrance.

"Hope you don't mind," Spyro began, only for the dragon to put a quieting hand out, as he sat before the bag's corner and hole.

"Mind? No, no, not at all! I rather think you'll enjoy! You, Figment, my boy, eat, eat! Pass those along to your lovely friends, I insist! Ho ho!"

"Thanks!"

Figment did his best with massive hands to carefully move a mess of sandwiches and fruits out, able to reach just far enough that Cynder's more slender arms and hands could take them, and pass them to Spyro. All the while, the dragon gladly sewed the hole, suturing it shut with what Figment had to agree was a masterful surety. All *that* while, he recited poetry, Figment doing his best to listen:

*To and fro and back, one sews
Time may tear, and there, lay low
Though one may mend—if how, one should know
So as to heal what was then aghast
Here, a present, sutures passed!*

Just like that, the deed was done, and easily. Given the past several worlds, it was beyond pleasant to have such smooth resolutions available. Plus, the tiny cakes and sandwiches, while insufficient on their own, proved rather good, in heaps. The dragon bit the line off, then gave the mended hole a good matronly pat.

"And there you have it," he chirped, deeply pleased with himself, on all fronts.

"That was quite the recitation," Figment said, applauding. Spyro and Cynder could be heard doing the same, outdoors. "You made that all up just now?"

The dragon nearly swelled out with the praise.

"Yes, well, I thought you might like it!"

"I've got one!" Spyro added, his muzzle visible as a toothy grin. *"There once was a gnoll from Atoll--"*

"Spyro," Cynder balked, cutting him off.

"You know that one, too?"

"We can't thank you enough," Figment interrupted, giving as much of a bow as he could, wedged inside the cave as he was. "That's lovely work! You've been very kind, eh..."

"I'm a dragon, my boy, call me as such," he chuckled, moving past the bag. "It really is no trouble, none at all! It's all my pleasure, having good company! Pray, tell: where do you three souls hail from? Some land of giants, I might suppose?"

"Heh, not so much," Figment replied, as the dragon scooped up a large kettle, filling it with the contents of the cauldron. "We all come from our own places. Mine is called London. I think you'd enjoy it! We have science and arts, and afternoon tea and biscuits, and--"

"Well! You won't find any tea quite so pleasant as this, my dear boy," the dragon interjected, setting a very large, very full kettle down on the table. He had already arranged a very elaborate tea set across the table, and was pouring himself a cup, then one for Figment. "Go on, enjoy!"

Figment reached down, trying his best to pinch his huge claws around the teacup without breaking it. This, naturally, took a moment, and in that time the dragon sat happily down at the end of the table, fixed a healthy slice of cake, and started to eat.

"This is a beautiful spot for a home," Figment began, as he tried to get hold of the cup. "Though, isn't it a bit remote?"

"I enjoy the privacy, quite," the dragon laughed, swallowing his cake in ample bites, until it seemed to catch in his throat, making him cough some into a polite fist. "I...mmm..."

"I don't suppose you come across any villagers, then?"

"Oh, no, no, they...mmm, pardon! I can't say I've seen so much as a soul."

"You think they mind you, then?" Figment ventured, pressing slightly.

"Ho ho, not at all! I haven't an enemy in the w...hmm...mmm, excuse me, I, ahah, seem to...have a bit stuck..."

At that, the dragon took his cup of tea and downed it, then cleared his throat. He appeared flummoxed a moment, then sighed and grabbed the kettle. A small coughing fit erupted, and though he looked at the tea cup a moment, the dragon ultimately chose the latter, and brought the entire kettle up, gulping the whole thing down in seconds.

"Oh!" he coughed, thumping his belly with his fist as mannerly as he could. "Dear, me, pardon! Oho, my, how utterly boorish! I..."

A loud gurgle cut in, from deep within his huge, round belly, so strong that it rattled the table, making the tea cup dance away from Figment's claws.

"Gracious, was that me?"

The dragon blushed, then gasped, as a deep rumbling tremor began to rise up from within him, to the point where he closed his eyes and shook like a scaly cataclysm. Figment blinked, slowly, watching on a few seconds, then rearing back in surprise as the dragon only quivered worse, then began to noisily expand bigger...

"What," Figment muttered, only to cry out as the dragon's entire rounded body suddenly blew up larger. His rump and hefty tail bulged down into the cracking chair, splitting it, letting his rumbling bulk crash to the floor of the cave.

"Oh," the dragon hiccuped, covering his mouth, before his arms and legs abandoned their feral formations, his forearms lengthening, his shoulders puffing into mounds of increasingly-defined muscle. His belly mass surged up and into his chest, forcing two oversized mounds to burst into view, as his head rose higher and higher on a widening, lengthy neck. "OH, HEAVENS!"

"What's going on, in there?" Cynder asked, peeking in.

"Ah, er," Figment sputtered, as the rumbling dragon's green skin stretched audibly larger, straining to contain the sudden explosion of muscles, as his growing legs pushed out into angles, kneecaps pushing out between a forming set of thighs and calves. Both knees pushed up, up from underneath the table, tilting it upward as the gasping dragon blew up from his former 20 feet to 30 feet, then 40!

The dragon grunted and trembled all over, the remainder of his belly still bulging out enough to start shoving the entire table away, towards the entrance, as his shoulders and biceps boomed bigger, drum-beats of growth throbbing throughout his swelling mass. With every pulse, he billowed out in all directions, inflating and groaning past 50 feet, then 60, until Figment felt the dragon's flaring triceps bulge tight against his belly, the pair starting to overfill the cavern interior as their scales collided and bulged tighter and tighter together.

"MERCIFUL HEAVENS, W-WHAT..." the dragon groaned, shaking and booming even bigger, his voice dropping bigger and lower and thicker, as his head thumped up into the cavern ceiling, his already-pillar-thick neck bloating up into it seconds later, in turn pinched in by the rising swells of his overgrown pectorals and shoulders. "WHAT...WAS IN...T-THAT...TEEEEEEEA!?"

Spyro and Cynder watched as the end of the table scooted out, out into the open, and Spyro quickly ate everything that was still on it, before a bursting bulge of green scales ballooned out from the cavern, following it.

"Oh, no," Cynder huffed, as the entire cavern began to shake more and more ominously.

Inside, Figment struggled on, trying to get his arm between the cave wall and the dragon's constantly-growing back muscles, in an attempt to get at the bag. He managed to tug enough to where it popped free, the top flap thankfully keeping candies from flying all about, and Figment then tossed it over to his foot, and used his foot to start pushing it out, lest they all be crushed by their combined girth. Big as he was, even Figment was beginning to feel the severity of the pressure, as the dragon moaned and trembled and boomed even *bigger*, inflating ceaselessly larger and stronger, still.

A bicep so big even Figment couldn't hug around it blew up against his face, shoving his muzzle to the side as he felt the dragon's brawn tense in, pectorals and lats and shoulders and thighs all densely contracting, before the confounded dragon bellowed in both shock and delight, and absolutely *detonated* in size. Figment's entire body was shoved back against the interior wall, his scaly purple bulk pushing into the hearth and fire, making him wince as the cauldron tilted enough to allow its attacked lid to swing down, shutting tight.

"G-GOODNESS...M...MMMMMMM--"

The dragon's cave cracked here and there, then everywhere, as Spyro and Cynder started to back away. Spyro gulped down the last of the food, just as a vast swell of yellow belly scales boomed up from an cracking split in the topline. Great segments of rock blew away, raining down, as the whole cave snapped in two, and a vast, towering bulge of growing scales expanded higher and higher and higher, up past either of them.

"I knew it!" Cynder groaned, just as the trembling, cracking cavern exterior finally blasted away, spraying rock and smoke and baked goods everywhere.

When the smolder and ruin finally cleared off, Spyro and Cynder looked straight ahead...then, they looked up. And up. And up. The end of their eyes' quest was at a staggering 800...no, 850 feet, as the towering colossus that was now their new friend wobbled, sitting in place. Where a cave once had been, there was now only the dragon, and what a dragon he was.

"OH...OH!" the dragon barked, looking himself over, then his devastated homestead. Though much of his pear-like girth had elevated up into his massive, heaving chest and billowed-out arms and thighs, plenty still remained, giving him a muscular body and a healthy belly. "OH, MY...MY HOME! WHAT...WHAT LUNACY IS..."

Figment wobbled about, trying to get his balance, as he walked around the massive form of the dragon, coming to a rest by leaning with a hand against his towering sides. Even sitting down, the dragon made Figment look like a stuffed toy, to be cuddled on with both arms (though those arms were

so vast, they could have hugged a whole castle). Spyro and Cynder both stepped back, mouths wide open. The dragon patted himself over in shock, then patted his chest a second and third time, before flexing a green bicep so thick that it peaked up past his head. A strange marriage of thrill and disdain warred inside him, and the look on his face matched perfectly.

"I...I'M SO BIG," he boomed, albeit still effeminately, feeling a neck thicker and longer than the road into town. "OH, MY VOICE! IS THAT MY VOICE? IT'S RATHER LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE, ISN'T IT! MY, MY!"

He batted his huge eyes, looking the area over, and his concern switched instantly.

"OH...OH! M-MY BOY! FIGMENT? ARE YOU THREE QUITE ALRIGHT?"

"W-we're alright!" Figment's voice answered. That the humongous musclebound dragon sighed in relief was enough to start putting the three of them in relief. From up high, the dragon's head appeared, looming beyond the absurdly-wide, thick shelf that was his scaled chest. "Are you okay?"

"AM I...I AM CERTAINLY NOT!" he boom-spoke, tilting his chin up indignantly. "MY HOME IS QUITE THRASHED, MY BOY! YOU SEE IT! I CERTAINLY DO NOT! I DON'T, AT ALL! WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THIS!?"

"Ooh, should we even explain?" Spyro muttered, eyeing up at the mountainous behemoth. "I mean, look at him! How'd he even get any candy, in the first place?"

"I really don't know!" Figment answered, sincerely. "He had tea, and..."

The math presented itself, and Figment's deductive skills did their share. He covered his muzzle with both hands, then wandered over to the bag and picked it up.

"The hole," he growled, making a little unhappy sneer. "The hole, I was close to the cauldron on his hearth, he must have been boiling tea while showering, and the hole in the bag...some bits of candy must have tumbled in and melted down in the mix!"

"WELL, DON'T CHATTER IDLY, MY BOY," the dragon's massive voice rumbled, shaking the loosed rocks around them. "OH, WHAT AM I TO DO, HERE?"

With no warning, the tremendous dragon shifted, standing up, in effect towering even higher over the three of them. He grumbled as he dusted the bits of his former home off, snorting.

"Two for two, on home ruining," Spyro muttered, looking mortified.

"W-we may have accidentally...ah, caused this," Figment shouted up. In response, the dragon's massive feet slam-slammed around, as all that muscle and belly turned to them. Again, his mighty muzzle peered out from his far-too-large chest, his eyes set in a stern glare.

"YOU?" he bellowed, then bashfully corrected, lowering his tone. He still looked angry enough, though. "HOW IN THE WORLD—"

"We're all gigantic, right?"

The dragon glared on, but he was clearly thinking.

"...RIGHT, YES, YES."

"Well, our bag was leaking candies, and—"

"OH, YOU HAD SWEETS!" the dragon giggled, lightening up quickly, before forcing his glare back on. "Y-YOU OUGHT TO HAVE SHARED, EARLIER, THEN! REALLY!"

"Ah, those candies are what made the three of us so huge! They have uh...certain properties..."

"AND YOU AIN'T GONNA TAKE A SINGLE OTHER ONE, YOU FIEND!"

The dragon blinked, then looked to the East. Spyro, Cynder, and Figment did the same. There, looming in the midday sunlight, was a red dragon. A very, very, *very big* one. He was red and yellow, humanoid, and utterly mobbed with hulking brawn. He must have stood nine hundred feet, at least, from foot to horn, and his long tail seemed to stretch out beyond him, past the hill he had just crested.

Naturally, the math proved just as simple, here.

"You!" Figment shot, pointing at the massive dragon. He seemed more like a blown-up version of the Asian dragons in the books of lore at the laboratory. He also had serious teeth, the kind that could have made quick work of the bag. "You're the one that hitched a ride in my bag, then chewed through it! You're the candy thief!"

"GOODNESS, ANOTHER GIANT," the dragon muttered, covering his mouth.

"THIEF?" the red titan snorted, blowing out a spray of coal-colored smoke. "I AIN'T SOME RANK VILLAIN, PIPSQUEAK! YOU'RE SPEAKIN' TO THE MIGHTY, THE MAMMOTH, THE MOST-MASSIVE AND THEREFORE IMPRESSIVE **MUSHU!** NOW, Y'ALL STAND ASIDE, WHILE I TAKE CARE OF THIS MENACE, HERE!"

"PARDON?" the dragon politely peeped, cocking his head curiously.

"YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, SAY WHATEVER VILE EXCUSES AND LIES YOU WANT! I AIN'T INTERESTED IN SPARIN' SOME BIG, VILLAGE-THREATENIN' MONSTER!"

"OH!" the dragon chortled, his chest powerfully bouncing as he gave a little wave of a hand. "OH, MY, NO! I BELIEVE YOU'RE IN ERROR, MY DEAR BOY! NO, I—"

Just like that, Mushu's massive fist connected, punching the dragon square in his belly. Given what a cushioning belly it was, the mountain-shattering force of the blow only managed to make the nearly-as-large dragon lurch back a little bit. Rather than being properly eradicated, the dragon instead huffed, offended. He folded his equally-bulging arms, and gave a fairly vicious *harumph*.

"OH, NOW, REALLY, SIR," he rumbled, "THAT'S WHOLLY UNCALLED FOR!"

Big and thick as he had grown, Mushu was still impressed.

"AH, ALRIGHT, OKAY," he growled, cracking his knuckles loudly, all as Spryo, Cynder and Figment watched in disbelief. "I SEE HOW IT IS. YOU WANT A FIGHT-FIGHT!"

"HMM? A FIGHT? GRACIOUS, NO, I NEVER—"

This time, Mushu's tail answered, as the colossal red dragon spun his heavy body around, and sent it cracking out, striking the dragon's face with a nasty whip-snap. The green behemoth stumbled back, booming feet scrambling to keep all of him upright as he wavered, then slammed back down into balance, fuming openly.

"HOW TERRIBLY TERRIBLE!" he blared, stomping one angry, Inn-sized foot into the shaking ground. "I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF THIS...THIS VIOLENCE! SHOO, THEN, OFF WITH YOU! GO ON!"

"YEAH, AS IF I'D LET YOU GO ON RAMPAGIN' AROUND!"

"Excuse me, Mushu," Figment yelled, or tried to, as Mushu was already bashing his way into a charge, rushing the green dragon full-on. The both of them crashed down into the mountainsides bordering the valley hills, and the mountains themselves shook on impact. "Mushu, sir? Hey!"

"I can't believe I'm saying this," Cynder said, "but we're too small to get their attention."

This, specifically, set Spyro's muzzle to a frown.

"Yeah, that's no good," Spyro grumbled, his thick tail looping about. "I don't think that red one's ready to hear us out, Fig. He's set on...I dunno, *conquering* the other one. I guess."

"This is insane, even for us! Figment, we have to stop this!"

"He's an Eastern dragon," Figment explained, and fast, as the two much larger dragons wrestled nearby. "I knew we had ended up somewhere in Asia, in the last world! I can see what happened: we landed there, he got into the bag, and followed us into this world. He escaped with a candy, after all, look at him now!"

"Wait, so he was that small, but eating one candy did this to him? He's huge!"

"The candies are bigger now, remember? He must have figured out a way to gradually eat it, which is why we didn't see him growing to our size, right away."

"So, he was with us in town, and heard the villagers," Cynder deduced, as Figment nodded.

"And he thinks..."

All of them were silenced as the green dragon sailed, briefly but frighteningly, through the air, separating them as they dove to avoid his head as he crashed down to the ground. His jaws snapped close, as he had been screaming throughout his flight, and a great mound of dirt and shattered table and the like vanished into his gullet as he landed. He swallowed and spluttered gracelessly as he rose back up to his full size, coughing and gagging.

"OH, JUST AWFUL!" he groaned, sticking his huge tongue out, not seeing quickly enough as the bigger Mushu lunged after him. The both of them smashed down heavily, cracking the entire hill upon impact, as the huge red broke into a horizontal grapple with the green. Their hands clasped together in struggle as the green dragon unhappily tried to protest.

"SHUT IT, FIEND!" Mushu roared, drawing a fist back, and pounding down on the other dragon. Even the green dragon's tail tried to avoid and dodge Mushu's as the two long digits coiled and snaked and jerked erratically. "YOU'RE GOIN' DOWN, RIGHT NOW!"

"I-I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!"

"THAT'LL MAKE THIS EASIER, YEAH, YOU KEEP THAT UP!"

"I know!" Spyro suddenly said, taking hold of Figment's shoulder. "Gimme another candy, Fig! I'll break up the fight!"

"Won't that just sow more chaos?" Cynder asked. "What if you do what you did to Maleficent, and open up a portal, to take away some of their sizes?"

"They might be lost forever, in limbo," Figment replied, fidgeting anxiously with his hands. "I hate to say it, but I don't think that Mushu fellow is going to back down...I think we have to go the candy route, this time."

"Whoo!" Spyro cheered, reaching into the bag, and pulling out a blue-red candy. "You heard him!"

Before either party could object, Spyro popped the entire thing into his maw, and gulped happily, licking his muzzle over.

"Whoa, that's actually pretty delicious," he added, genuinely pleased, before the rumbling within him began. "Oh, boy, here we go! Hey, what did red do agai—AHHH!"

Spyro's 150-foot body shook openly, his vast muscles rattling and quaking with anticipation; as Cynder and Figment backed away, the over-muscled male threw his head back and bellowed in joy as he twitched, trembled, then erupted twice as large, before them. His feet swelled wider apart as his muscles kept their proportions, flexing hard as the 300-foot tall behemoth grit his teeth and closed his eyes, bulging outward again, doubling in size a second time. Instead of the steadier, more consistent increase of before, this time, the growth seemed to come in aggressive fits and starts, as the 600-foot Spyro flexed even tighter, blowing out a thick arc of flames.

"Y...YYYYEEEEEEAAAHAHAHAHA!!!"

As Mushu put the dragon into a mean headlock, caging it in swollen scaly muscle, the both of them looked ahead as Spyro erupted again, blasting up in one fantastic, swelling burst, spurting all the way up past 700...800...900...1,000...1,100 feet, the great heave leveling out at 1,200 feet, total! His heels had gone from digging into the grass, to sinking into it, to cracking and crushing down through the soil and bedrock alike, his sheer weight skyrocketing lower and lower into the crumbling terrain. His wings sailed out in scope, past ship's sails, past an old world theater cover, spreading so wide they

could cover a city street, as his head rose higher and higher into the sky above.

"WHAT IN THE," Mushu gulped, lessening his hold on the dragon enough that the green giant could slip free and stagger back, trying to get away, but almost as awestruck as Mushu. "AW, NO WAY, NO! NAH-AH, IF HE'S GETTIN' MORE CANDIES, THEN I AIN'T FALLIN' BEHIND!"

Mushu glanced around, forcing his attention away, as Spyro trembled one last time, then bellowed in bliss, doubling in size, *again*. His godly shadow spilled over them all as he rumbled and groaned, curling his ever-growing toes into the crumbling turf. At 2,400 feet, Spyro finally stopped, and blew out a massive, giddy train of smoke, laughing the rest out as his chest bobbed, and his mighty abs tensed. He looked himself over, patting his bulk in unbridled satisfaction.

"ALRIGHT, BETTER!" he spoke, his every utterance an explosion of bass. "NOW, AS FOR YOU, MIGHTY-WHATEVER..."

He looked down beyond himself, having to ignore how amazing the view had become, in time to see Mushu scrambling away from their new friend. Still, at almost a third of Spyro's size, Mushu was easily able to close in fast on what he realized was...Figment!

"FIG, BUDDY, MOVE IT!"

Both Cynder and Figment had dug into the bag for their own candies, when the sudden shaking of the earth and Spyro's verbal boomings alerted them to Mushu. The vast red dragon's thighs bulged as he dug in, then vaulted for them, for Figment—*for the bag*.

Cynder held onto hers as she shoved Figment away, just as Mushu landed. The ground exploded out from his weight, sending Figment flying off one way, and Cynder the other. A hand as big as a mansion shot out, red claws extended, grabbing the whole bag away from Figment, and pulling it back.

"HAH!" Mushu whooped, rearing up in time to detect Spyro's far larger body approaching, behind him. Mushu wasted no time in bringing his hand and the bag up, palm open, his mouth opening wide to consume the entire thing.

"BAG, RETURN!"

Mushu didn't notice the magical flash. All he noticed was the empty palm smacking up dumbly into his muzzle. He did see the little flash as the toy-sized Figment scrambled off and away, hugging the bag tight once more.

"OH, THAT'S JUST DIRTY!" Mushu huffed, only to twist and dodge in a sudden panic as Spyro's arms reached out to grab him, narrowly missing. This put Mushu into a stumble, and all he could do was roll away as Spyro lunged for him once again.

"COME HERE, YOU LITTLE," Spyro growled, making Mushu flush darkly. The smaller red dragon turned and blew a torrent of flame, blasting Spyro square in the chest, knocking the bigger dragon abruptly back.

"AIN'T NOBODY GON' CALL ME LITTLE, HEAR?" Mushu roared, incensed. To Spyro's surprise, the red dragon leaned in and put everything into his shoulder, bashing enough of himself into

Spyro that even he was sent back into a fantastically heavy roll, crashing down onto the ridge and waterfall, over the forestry, smashing the hill's slope as flat as the rocks and trees, under ton upon ton of muscle.

"Spyro!" Cynder shouted, thudding over to him, herself only as large as the towering male's head, as he lay there.

"UGH, I'M FINE, I'M FINE," he grunted, embarrassed. "HE'S GOT A MEAN TACKLE."

Seeing Mushu on the advance, Cynder ran and tucked into a roll of her own, her huge hips wide enough that they caught Mushu's feet, sending the giant red into a face-planting, tumbling crash.

"Are you okay?" Figment asked, hustling over with a series of huffing puffs toward the reluctant dragon. "Are you hurt?"

"GRACIOUS," the green giant croaked, "I STILL HAVE...SOMETHING IN MY THROAT, EXCUSE..." he swallowed hard, then sighed, grinning. "OH, BETTER, BETTER. THAT DID THE THING, I DO THINK! AH, YES, MY DEAR BOY, THANK YOU...WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU THINK THAT RED MADMAN IS ABOUT?"

Figment was the size of a small doll, compared to the dragon, much the same as he was with Mushu, meaning it was a bit of a task to get up on top of his mounded pectorals, which he patted comfortingly. Ninety feet, as it happened, wasn't much against over eight hundred, but he tried to offer what comfort he could.

"I think he's another traveler, like us! He seems to think you're the enemy of the village!"

"OHO, HOW TERRIBLY SILLY!" the dragon chuckled, making Figment shake cutely. "WELL, I SHALL HAVE TO SIMPLY EXPLAIN THE MATTER, THEN! THE FELLOW DOES PUT UP RATHER A GOOD ROW, BUT THIS WHOLE FUSS, OH, IT CAN BE TALKED THROUGH, WITH A BIT OF...OOH..."

To Figment's horror, the rumbling was returning, tenfold.

"Wh...what did you just swallow?" he asked, as the shuddering quake racing through the dragon's yellow chest and huge belly grew worse and worse and worse, yet.

"HMM? WHY, I DON'T THINK I SWALL—OOOOOOH!"

Instantaneously, Figment's view of the dragon changed, in that the dragon no longer existed as a part of the scenery; the dragon, in one hiccuping blast of growth, had *become* the scenery. The stretch of scales pulling wider and tighter roared over everything else as Figment hollered and hugged down tight, feeling the rising wave of growth as his new friend exploded everywhere, booming from 850 feet to 1,300 feet, then 1,700 feet, in a steady rush of inflation. His muscles ballooned to unthinkable spans, partial liftoff from the ground happening simply by dint of his backside blowing up against the entire mountainside, his upper half pushing up along it, as his lower belly and humongous legs muscles pushed back toward the forest, toward Spyro and Cynder and Mushu, all of whom looked back in total fear. His growing head towered up higher still, pushing beyond the lower peaks of the mountain range, the rest of him rumbling bigger and wider and heavier back towards the forests.

"WHOA," Spyro gasped, scrambling back up to his feet, as Cynder raced away from the sheer wall of the dragon's growing belly and legs. His growth was so brutally rapid, so voracious, that Mushu found himself being bowled over by it, prompting Cynder to turn back and help pull his much larger body back out again. "FORGET HIM, MOVE!"

"Come on!" she hollered, helping he stunned Mushu back up; in return, without a word, Mushu scooped Cynder up in his huge arms and thundered away, running past Spyro as he stood up in full.

By the time he was up, the dragon's stretching belly collided directly with him; even at nearly half a mile tall, Spyro already found it difficult to contain the raging surge of the dragon's body, which continually boomed bigger, spreading everywhere. A paunch over three thousand feet across rumbled and bulged, pushing Spyro's musclebound body back, prompting him to dig in and shove against it, as the mile-tall reluctant dragon moaned and shuddered and burst even bigger!

"GAH," Spyro huffed, his hands slamming up against the dragon's thickening scales, pushing back for all they were worth. The moment they connected, however, he felt it. A great burst of pressurized heat tingled into him, burning wonderfully against his connecting palms, and before he knew what was happening, Spyro was growing, as well. "W...H-HEY...HEY! SO THAT'S W-WHAT RED D-DOES!"

Instead of panicking further, now Spyro was cackling like mad. He felt his building-sized fingers bulge even larger, spreading out across more and more of the dragon's growing belly, as Spyro's body twitched and blew up to a clean, lovely three thousand feet, total.

Still, even as he felt the pipeline bring in more and more power, he could quickly tell that the dragon was growing larger...even as he fed, it was still going strong!

"H-HOW MUCH BIGGER...IS THIS GUY GETTING!?" he growled, trying to will more and more into himself, as the tidal bulk swelled bigger around him, dimpling out against his swollen, growing muscles. He felt pockets of muscle rising out as the power flooded into him, wild, undisciplined, forcing his back to blow out bigger, before his widening neck and hips caught up. As Spyro surged up to 3,500 feet, then 4,000, the green dragon whimpered and moaned, blowing up past 4 miles, then 6! His back muscles boomed, ballooning mercilessly larger against the cracking mountain, as it went from a wall, to a seat, then a cushion, compared to the vast, ever-growing male.

"How?" Figment wailed, wobbling in place. "How can he be this huge!?"

Progressively more and more lost on a set of vast pectorals, Figment struggled his way to a stand, then fished out several candies. Two or three must have been in hand, he couldn't quite tell; as he raised it out of the bag, the monstrously huge dragon burst even larger, forcing Figment into a slide down into the dip in his chest. His grip failed, leaving one random candy caged with in his hand, and with no alternatives, he quickly took it up and swallowed...

Their running had brought Mushu and Cynder clear past the forests that kept the dragon and the village apart, meaning the village's tiny walls were suddenly there, before them. They were too big, too high up now, to even hear the myriad screams and wails of the terrified humans below, and frankly, there wasn't much time to dwell on them.

"Here, put me down, quickly," Cynder ordered. Shockingly, Mushu obeyed.

"YEAH, ALRIGHT," he huffed, turning with her to see the great wall of dragon's belly crushing out bigger and bigger over the horizon, smashing over the snapping forest green like a thin blanket. "WHAT DO WE DO? HE'S STILL GROWIN' BIGGER!"

"If he keeps growing, the village actually will be in real danger! Right, we...uh..."

Cynder opened her palm, and there indeed was another candy. For all the panic going on, Mushu definitely noticed it.

"GOOD IDEA! OKAY, HAND IT OVER, AND I'LL—"

He went slack-jawed as Cynder popped the black-and-green-swirled orb into her own mouth, and swallowed.

"OR THAT."

"There's a reason why it can't be you, if I'm correct! Just...haaaah, g-give me a second..."

Mushu, understandably, alternated between gawking at the encroaching wave of bulk, and the transformation happening in Cynder: her wings flicked back, folding in, as she tensed all over, then huffed and rattled all over. It wasn't just that she was growing larger, but the way that her curvaceous features clumped out with bulge after bulge of muscle; much in the same way he had swollen up, so too did the smaller dragoness.

He was soon watching only Cynder, even as the sounds of breaking timber and crushed earth rose higher and closer. By the time his focus had decided on her, she was lurching up to half of his size, her dark deltoids blowing up so large that they nearly passed his chest, as she grunted and made growing fists, then stood beyond even his height!

"WHY COULDN'T I HAVE DONE THAT, EXACTLY?" Mushu finally worked up the nerve to ask, as Cynder's bosom blew up over his muzzle, almost bumping his whisker as it passed.

"B...BECAUSE...I NEED AN ELEMENT...OR MAGIC...TO MAKE THE REST HAPPEN..."

His confusion swelled along with the reluctant dragon's belly, which stubbornly ballooned ever-higher into the air, the peak of its bulging span nearing a vertical mile, as the 10-mile super-giant quaked and swelled larger, still, getting ever-closer. Even then, a 4-mile tall Spyro struggled on, absorbing more and more, only managing to slow the great dragon's growth. His vast muzzle appeared up in the skies above, far beyond the clouds, his mouth open in a great, gasping cry of both amazement and fear.

That was what needed to be stopped. As Mushu saw, Cynder was hardly a fraction of that, even as her muscular form heaved up, and up, well-past his size, leaving her at over two thousand feet high when she finally stopped.

"WHEN I SAW SPYRO GROW," Cynder panted, adjusting to her bulk, "HE DIDN'T GET AS

EXPLOSIVELY BIG AS YOU OR THE OTHER DRAGON...I THINK THAT'S BECAUSE OUR CANDIES DON'T GIVE AS MUCH INITIAL GROWTH...BUT WE CAN ABSORB MORE, AS A RESULT!"

"FINE, FINE," Mushu grumbled, clearly not reassured. "BUT WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO, HERE? YOU SAID AN ELEMENT? ELEMENT, TO WHAT? YOU STILL AIN'T BIG ENOUGH TO—"

"FIRE! YOU NEED TO HIT ME WITH FIRE! GIVE ME ALL YOU HAVE! NOW!"

"UH, YEAH, I DON'T—"

"MUSHU!" she commanded, from beyond her looming chest. "DO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO, OR NOT?"

Her answer came, as Mushu pursed his lip, then took a massive breath, and blasted Cynder with a great ocean of flame, point-blank. Like some scaly, feminine furnace, Cynder's body did indeed react, the flames contacting, then soaking into her unharmed form, more and more vanishing into it. And, indeed, she began to grow further, literally pumped larger by the living bellows that was Mushu.

One volley of flame, and Cynder's monstrous bulk expanded, filling with energy and heat, bursting up past 3,000 feet. The villagers' collective shouts and insults and fearful verbal assaults all petered out, dying away from the overwhelming sight of her rump and thighs and tail surging over the entire village, her vast heels and soles bulging bigger on either side of the wall.

Another blast from Mushu, and Cynder rumbled and snorted, shaking and stretching up bigger still, passing 4,000 feet...5,000 feet...

"MOOOORE," she boomed, half-dutiful, half-rapturous.

"YEAH, DON'T RUSH ME!"

Even nearly a thousand feet tall, Mushu felt himself being more and more overshadowed, and those flickering insecurities and jealousies reared back up. He had been the biggest, at long last, and now, this! It figured! It just figured!

He channeled all the emerging negativity into blowing harder, and harder, blowing Cynder up past seven thousand feet, beyond 1.3 miles in size; it was a size that would have boggled her mind, before having to face down something that much bigger. Now? She might as well have grown a few inches.

"MOOOOOOOORE!!!"

The onslaught of support increased, pushing Cynder up to 2 miles, then 2.5, over thirteen thousand feet, her height nearly matching the village's length; as Spyro pressed his 6-mile tall, nearly thirty-two thousand-foot body into the dragon's even-larger body, the entire world seemed to hold its breath. The sky-high swell of creaking yellow-green scales parted the lower clouds, a looming juggernaut of bulk, against which Spyro resisted with every fiber of his being, until both he and Cynder were pushing, together. Mushu found himself stuck between them and the dragon's belly as it crept

within a hundred yards of the village...then 50 yards...20 yards!

"ALMOST!" Cynder bellowed, as she had to roar to make any sound above the rampant growth surges. "HE'S ALMOST ST-STOPPING!"

Just as Mushu breathed his last possible streaks of flame, the next attempt producing only coughs of ash and soot, it stopped. The growth ceased, the air cleared, and the landscape returned to a still. The immense wall of warm scales remained, a few feet shy of the village gate, meaning Mushu was pressed hard against it, while Spyro and Cynder had reflexively stepped over to the sides, to better manage. The village remained in a quiet terror, as did the three dragons, the clouds passing and playing around the vast dragon's belly plates, in the periphery. All told, the reluctant dragon lay atop the countryside at an astonishing 15 miles in size, bigger than many villages, bigger than the city which Maleficent had taken control of before. It would have taken Spyro several minutes to fly that, at his old size.

"IS...IS THAT IT?" Spyro asked, finally opening his eyes. Even as he spoke, he continuously absorbed size, his body's growth the only real sound left as its stretching filled the air. He crept steadily larger, leaving Cynder's impressive 5-mile tall body behind as he ballooned up past 8 miles, then 9 miles after. The dragon very, very gradually shrank back, receding and diminishing into something more manageable, as Cynder opened her eyes and stepped back, watching Spyro grow and grow.

"LOOKS LIKE IT," she boomed, even speaking softly. She looked down to Mushu, who remained plastered against the half-snapped gate of the village, even after the dragon's belly had pulled back. "YOU STILL LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE."

"YEAH, UH, I'M FINE, FINE," Mushu grumbled, dusting himself off, then looking back at the tiny village door and wall. "I, UH, I HOPE Y'ALL SAW ALL THAT, DOWN THERE," he continued, watching the villagers watch them, from their side. "DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR Y'ALL, ALRIGHT?"

"I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GOING TO CHEER US ON," Cynder whispered. Mushu glumly seconded.

"WHAT MADE YOU THINK A THROW-DOWN WAS A GOOD IDEA, ANYWAY?" Spyro asked, still growing bigger and bigger, nearby. Between a dragon now standing 10 miles tall and an equally-disappointed five-mile one, Mushu shrank back, more over-matched than ever before. To old Fa Deng, he had at least constituted a handful. Now? Even nearing a thousand feet in height, Mushu didn't even clear the under-curve of Spyro's heel. He was an ant, now. To Cynder, he didn't even reach the top of her foot, so that hardly helped, either.

"LOOK," Mushu shout-talked, just to reach the cloud-height pair. "I JUST, I WAS DEMOTED BY MY FAMILY SPIRITS, I...I FELT INSULTED. I THOUGHT IF I DID SOMETHIN' REAL IMPRESSIVE, MAYBE WORD WOULD GET BACK, AND THEY'D ACCEPT ME. YOU REALLY TELLIN' ME, I PICKED A FIGHT WITH A *GOOD* DRAGON?"

As he asked, the decreasing mass of the reluctant dragon suddenly pulled back, prompting all three dragons to look that way, on the odds he had finally gotten his bearings, and stood up.

Not quite so.

"WHEW...IS IT OVER?"

The voice that rolled over the plains and down through the clouds was of such a magnitude that the words almost didn't register as decipherable, even to Spyro and Cynder. The mystified trio all looked out at the enormous green dragon, only to find he had fainted outright from the shock of his monster-sized growth spurt. All the remaining belly and muscle on his now five-mile frame was being hoisted up, pulled over the crumbled mountain range by something even bigger...*far* bigger.

Realizing that the dragon hadn't roused, but was instead being helpfully pulled away, they chose to look higher up. All three gasped at the sight of Figment's muzzle, beyond the clouds. His belly and legs half-vanished in the haze of the atmosphere as he stood on the other side of the mountains, his feet larger than a small city; he was no longer big. Figment was *kingdom-sized*. At nearly 31 miles tall, over 160,000 feet, his heartbeat could be heard, *felt*.

Yet, for a being that monumentally vast, he was blushing like it was his very first anything.

"WHOA!" Spyro gasped, letting go of the dragon, stepping back clear over the village, flattening an entire glade and dell, at once. The brash dragon stood 11 miles high, so big and powerful and bulky that Mushu couldn't even see the ends of his hips...and Figment was nearly thrice *his* size.

"IT'S OVER!" Cynder finally thought to shout, as loud as she could. Figment was at such a stupidly huge scale that he had to tilt his vast head and wait, until the sound actually made it to him, and he allowed himself a grin.

"OH, GOOD! HE FAINTED, BUT HIS BODY KEPT GROWING, SO I WAS TRYING TO PULL HIM AWAY AS FAR AS I COULD."

"HE DID IT, ALRIGHT," Spyro sighed, finally relaxing, as Figment slid the still-massive dragon further away, helping to lay him down over the nearest of the same mountain range, as though it were a bed. With the dragon not taking up so much of the horizon, they saw Figment a little bit better, and gasped again. "HAH...HAHA! HEY, YOU TOOK THE PLUNGE! LOOK AT YOU, FIG!"

A few moments later, Figment's blank stare changed, as the sound carried. He looked himself over, a bit confused by Spyro's meaning, and saw what they had just seen.

Muscle. Vast, bulging fields of muscle, everywhere. His biceps still held their pump, from carrying the dragon back, and they were each so big that when he laid them down against the sides of his huge torso, they bulged out wide. It almost doubled his body width. Powerful thighs bulged with unfathomable strength, from simply managing that much tonnage. His shoulders were almost too big for him to see around, and his neck was a wide trunk of sleek sinew and bulk.

"OH!" he chirped, shaking the skies. ***"OH, I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE! GOODNESS! I'M SO...STRONG!"***

"THAT'S THE WAY TO GO, BUDDY!" Spyro laughed, nodding approvingly. Cynder was as quiet as Mushu, but unlike him, she blushed so hard that it burned.

The five-mile tall green dragon turned sleepily, crushing down on the mountains with his oceans of scaly bulk, snoring on innocently, as Spyro and Cynder crash-stepped carefully across the landscape, heading towards the horizon-sized Figment. Back at the village, the people remained frozen, still processing what had come quite genuinely up to their very doorstep.

On either side of their walls, foot-shaped craters of varying dimensions rested, having so narrowly missed them.

Figment took a full minute to take a seat, having first made sure that no little villages or kingdoms were in the way of his now-humanoid rear and tail, then from the effort of guiding so much massive weight down as gently as possible to the unwilling landscape. Even sitting, Figment was roughly 15 miles high, leaving a standing Spyro all the way up to his now quite-expanded chest. Cynder opted to sit as Mushu stood in between them, thoroughly humbled.

"I DIDN'T KNOW," Mushu sighed, shrugging his still-massive red shoulders. "I PROMISE, NOW, HONEST. I REALLY THOUGHT HE WAS SOME BAD GUY THAT NEEDED TAKING OUT. I JUST, I NEEDED MY FAMILY TO RECOGNIZE ME. I HOPE Y'ALL WILL ACCEPT, I APOLOGIZE. I MEAN, HEH, I WANTED TO BE THE BIGGEST, FOR ONCE, AND NOW HERE I AM, SMALLER THAN EVER BEFORE...IN COMPARISON, I MEAN. USED TO BE HALF A FOOT HIGH, AND THIS IS ACTUALLY WORSE, NOW."

"YOU *WERE* THE BIGGEST FOR A BIT, THERE," Spyro said, impressed. "THE FUNNY THING IS, IF YOU HADN'T STARTED OFF THIS CHAIN OF REACTIONS, YOU'D HAVE STAYED THE BIGGEST—"

"OKAY, ALRIGHT, I GET IT," Mushu barked, more defensive than angry. "JUST, I'LL LEAVE Y'ALL BE. I DUNNO HOW FAR Y'ALL EVEN TOOK ME, BUT I GOTTA GET BACK TO CHINA."

"OH, I WAS RIGHT," Figment chuckled, his voice thundering down.

"MUSHU, YOU WERE IN FIGMENT'S BAG," Cynder explained, calmly. "YOU DIDN'T SEE THE PORTAL WE WENT THROUGH. YOU...WE DIDN'T JUST WALK HERE. THIS IS A NEW REALM, A DIFFERENT REALITY. YOU LEFT YOUR WORLD WITH US, WHEN YOU STOWED AWAY."

Mushu stared up at Cynder, then broke out into laughter.

"OKAY, I SEE, YOU'RE GIVIN' ME SOME HEAT, FOR WHAT I DID..."

He looked back up, as the three dragons just stared blankly at him, then all looked away.

"HEHEHE, Y-YOU ALL..."

Mushu's smile dropped, as did his whiskers.

"OKAY, WELL, HOW DO I...GET HOME?"

"SAME WAY WE'RE TRYING, PORTAL TO PORTAL," Spyro said, flatly. "WELCOME TO THE WANDERER'S CLUB!"

"WE'RE ALL FROM DIFFERENT REALMS, MUSHU," Cynder said, stopping only a moment as her dark bicep twitched, drawing her attention. "THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME ADJUSTING."

"YOU'RE TELLIN' ME! I CAN'T JUST, I...I GOT A JOB BACK AT HOME! I BEEN GONE LONG ENOUGH, AS IT IS, YOU FEEL ME?"

"WE DO," Spyro said, somehow even more flatly.

"OKAY, WELL...WHAT NOW?"

"WHAT NOW IS, WE NEED A PORTAL," Figment replied, up above.
"THE GOOD NEWS IS...AT THIS LEVEL OF POWER INSIDE OF ME? I THINK I CAN DO IT. I THINK I CAN GET A BETTER GRIP ON CONJURING THE WORLD I ACTUALLY WANT TO."

"YOU WANNA TRY IT?" Spyro said, wagging.

"HEH, I DO! I THINK I CAN PULL IT OFF!"

"THEN, DO ME," Mushu roared, hopping heavily up with a huge raised hand. 'I MEAN, I KNOW I'VE BEEN TROUBLE, BUT I'M WILLIN' TO HELP Y'ALL TEST IT, IF YOU'RE WILLIN' TO HELP ME GET HOME!"

Figment heard, after a moment's pause, then nodded, grinning.

"YOU BET! SINCE WE WERE ALREADY THERE, LET ME IMAGINE THAT SAME LOCATION...ONE MOMENT..."

Figment's colossal eyes closed, and he concentrated. This time, the portal hardly hesitated in showing up, which made the smaller dragons all cheer in a welcome surprise. It swirled out, out, out, stretching from a few yards to several hundred, stopping at around twice Mushu's mighty size. A moment later, the indeterminate energy fluctuated, warping into the image of ancient jungles and spiraling waterfalls and high-peaked mountains, and Mushu beamed at the sight of it.

"HEY, THASSIT! HAH, ALRIGHT! I KNOW THAT TEMPLE! HEY, THANK YOU, FIGMENT, THANK YOU ALL, I APPRECIATE YOU GUYS, Y'ALL ARE ALRIGHT!"

Mushu gave a high salute as he passed Spyro and Cynder, nodding to them both. The vast spiral hovered there before him, when he turned back and looked at the still-slumbering green dragon,

stretched out over the entire mountain range.

"YEAH, UH...WOULD Y'ALL, YOU KNOW..."

"WE'LL PASS YOUR APOLOGY ON, SURE," Cynder said, nodding back.

"Y'ALL GET GOOD ENOUGH WITH THESE HERE PORTALS, YOU COME SEE ME, ALRIGHT? Y'ALL SAY THE WORD, AND I'LL MAKE EVERYTHING UP TO Y'ALL. PROMISE."

"GOOD TO MEET ANOTHER DRAGON THAT CAN FIGHT," Spyro said. There was no way he could ever know what the modest compliment meant to Mushu, at that moment. "GO SCARE EVERYONE WITH HOW BIG YOU GOT!"

Mushu, possibly the biggest mouth in his entire realm, just nodded in reply. He flexed playfully, then turned, straightened up, and stepped into the portal. It closed off after, and that was that.

"THAT'S YOUR GOODBYE?" Cynder laughed, looking up at Spyro.

"HE'S GOING TO COME OUT HALF THAT SIZE, SO I WANTED HIM TO LEAVE FEELING A HIGH ABOUT IT. AND YEAH, HE PUNCHED GOOD."

"MM-HMM. SO, THAT LEAVES US WITH SLEEPING BEAUTY, HERE," Cynder said, motioning out to the just-as-massive reluctant dragon. "WHAT DO WE DO WITH HIM?"

"OH, I GOT HIM," Spyro rumbled, beaming wide. "I'LL DRAIN HIM BACK DOWN TO SIZE, NO SWEAT."

"HAVEN'T YOU GOTTEN ENOUGH OF BEING THAT RIDICULOUSLY HUGE?"

"OBVIOUSLY, I HAVEN'T!" he soft-boomed, matter-of-fact, as he stomped over to and laid hands upon the dragon's shoulder, starting to shrink him further down, as Spyro huffed and shuddered up another mile larger, then another, and another.

"I CAN'T BELIEVE EITHER OF YOU GOT THAT MASSIVE, FIGMENT," Cynder said, sighing the words out. "YOU CLEARLY WOUND UP TAKING THE SAME CANDY THAT I TOOK...AND THAT DRAGON TOOK...AND MUSHU TOOK...WE'RE ALL BULKY AND BIG NOW, BUT YOU EXPLODED WAY BIGGER! AND SO DID HE!"

"ABOUT THAT," Figment mused, thinking, his finger pressing his muzzle as he pondered up beyond the cloud banks. **"I'M NOT TOO POOR AT QUICK MATH, AND I'M TRYING TO NAIL SOME NUMBERS DOWN. THE FIRST BLUE CANDY I ATE, I INCREASED IN SIZE ABOUT, OH...ONE-HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX TIMES, GIVE OR TAKE...THAT WAS A DARKER BLUE. BAG, RETURN!"**

At that, a now-massive flash covered the skies, and faded off, leaving a bag big enough to be

considered a land mass strapped to Figment, like always, matching his new size.

"LAST TIME THE BAG GREW WITH ME, SO DID THE CANDIES. THE ONE THAT BLEW ME UP TO 500 FEET, THAT WAS A REGULAR LITTLE NORMAL-SIZED CANDY. MUSHU EVENTUALLY CONSUMED A GROWN CANDY, BIG AS A BOULDER. HE SAID HE WAS HALF A FOOT, AT THE START, BUT WAS AT LEAST NINE-HUNDRED FEET, WHEN WE SAW HIM. FORGET THE MULTIPLIER I HAD OF 166; WITH THIS CANDY, HE BALLOONED UP ABOUT 1,800 TIMES LARGER. SO, THE BIGGER THE CANDY, THE GREATER THE POWER IT HOLDS. ADD TO THAT THE DARKNESS OF THE COLOR, ITS RICHNESS. I THINK SATURATED CANDIES HAVE THE MOST POWER."

All the while, Spyro listened, even as the slumbering dragon dwindled down to a mile, then 4,000 feet. Figment pulled another candy out of the now-immense bag, a bag so big it could have held small countries or nations inside. He fished out a candy, and though he could hold it easily, to the others, it was absolutely mammoth-sized. Spyro, at over 15 miles high, could have maybe held one in a hearty-enough hug. Cynder, it would have flattened.

"NOW, IMAGINE WHAT A CANDY AS BIG AS A HILL WOULD DO, HOW MUCH OF A MULTIPLIER IT MIGHT HAVE. WHILE NOT AN ABSOLUTE, I THINK THEY EACH HAVE A POTENTIAL RANGE OF EFFECT. AFTER ALL, MUSHU HAD THE SAME CANDY WE DID, AND EVEN AT HALF A FOOT, HE MADE IT TO 900 OR SO. WELL, OUR FRIEND HERE WAS 20 FEET, TO START, AND ATE...ER, DRANK THE SAME CANDY, MELTED DOWN, WITHOUT REALIZING IT. HE SHOULD HAVE BLOWN UP TO, OH...36,000 FEET, ROUGHLY 6 TO 7 MILES. BUT HE CONTINUED GROWING! HE MADE IT UP TO ABOUT 15! FOR ME, THOUGH, I WAS MORE LIKE MUSHU, I GREW FROM 90 FEET TO ABOUT 162,000!"

Cynder's head swam.

"UGH, ALL THESE VARIABLES AND ALTERATIONS," she groaned. "IT...IS A LOT TO TAKE IN, ESPECIALLY ALL AT ONCE..."

"I JUST KIND OF TUNED OUT, THOUGH THE NUMBERS ARE FUN," Spyro said.

"I FIND IT TERRIBLY INTRIGUING! IS IT BODY TYPES THAT

AFFECT THE DIFFERENCES, OR WAS IT SOMETHING ELSE? MAYBE THE DRAGON HERE HAD SOMETHING IN HIS TEA MIXTURE THAT CHANGED ITS COMPONENTS? ENHANCED IT?"

"WITH RESPECT, FIGMENT," Cynder finally said, "IS THIS REALLY SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE TAKING TIME TO DISCUSS? HOW IS IT RELEVANT?"

"I ONLY DWELL ON IT, BECAUSE OF THE PATTERN THAT'S EMERGING, HERE."

"WHICH ONE?"

"IT'S ONE THAT'S MORE CRITICAL THAN THE OTHERS, MORE THAN THE WORLD-HOPPING, OR THE SPENDING AND GAINING OF POWER; IT'S ESCALATION. EVERY WORLD, WE'VE BEEN PRESSED INTO SITUATIONS WHERE WE END UP BIGGER AND BIGGER. AND LOOK BY HOW MUCH, THIS TIME! CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN, AFTER A FEW MORE WORLDS, IF THIS CONTINUES AT THE CURRENT RATE? WE COULD END UP UTTERLY IMMENSE!"

"REALLY?" Spyro finally cut in, lighting up.

"WELL, WE CAN'T *NOT* CONTINUE FORWARD," Cynder countered, shrugging her massive shoulders.

"AGREED. WE CAN'T LOSE THE CANDIES, THEY'RE BECOMING TOO DANGEROUS TO LEAVE TO OTHERS. BUT, THEY'RE AS MUCH AS SOURCE OF DANGER TO US AS THEY ARE OF PROTECTION. IT'S A BIT OF A CONUNDRUM. IF WE WERE TO CRUSH THEM ALL TO POWDER SCATTER THEM BETWEEN WORLDS, THEN WE WOULD HAVE TO PAY THE TRAVEL TAX WITH WHATEVER SIZES WE HAVE, FROM THAT POINT. WE MIGHT POSSIBLY CONTINUE TO SHRINK DOWN TOO SMALL, AFTER ENOUGH ATTEMPTS...OR WORSE YET, GET TRAPPED..."

Even Cynder went quiet, at that thought.

"THAT'S...WHY I THINK YOU SHOULD BOTH...GO HOME."

Without any further discussion, Figment closed his huge eyes, overhead, and willed another portal open, near where Mushu's had appeared. Naturally, this one formed, and continued to expand out far beyond the previous, until it loomed into the upper atmosphere. Spyro and Cynder stopped everything and watched, as the vortex began to warp into the open fields and plains of Spyro's world—*their* world.

The two stared into it, then at each other.

"WHAT WILL YOU DO, THOUGH, FIG?" Spyro asked first. "I MEAN, YOU'LL JUST GO RIGHT TO YOUR WORLD, THEN? THAT'LL BE THE END OF IT ALL?"

"YUP! YOU FIRST, THOUGH."

Despite everything that had happened up until now, both dragons stayed put. *Because of* everything that had happened, up until now, they stayed put.

"ARE YOU BEING HONEST, FIGMENT?" Cynder asked, looking up intently at him. "YOU'LL REALLY GO BACK HOME, NEXT?"

Figment's eyes darted, the portal wavering nearby.

"YOU DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW THAT, DO YOU?" she continued, pressing. "BACK WHEN YOU FORMED THAT PORTAL, IN CHINA, YOU WEREN'T THINKING OF OUR WORLD, FIRST, WERE YOU? YOU WERE THINKING OF LONDON. AND IT DIDN'T WORK, DID IT? YOU COULD MANAGE OUR WORLD, BUT NOT YOURS."

A sudden flash of sadness caught Figment's face, and even 100,000 feet off the ground, he was too big to hide it.

"WELL...NO. I COULDN'T. I TRIED FIRST, SEVERAL TIMES, BUT ALL THAT MY MIND SWITCHED TO WAS YOUR WORLD. HONESTLY, EVEN IF YOU WENT BACK, YOU WOULD BOTH PROBABLY STILL END UP SEVERAL MILES TALL, AND BUILT LIKE TANKS. I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO DRAIN YOU BACK TO SIZE, AND DEPOSIT YOU HOME. WE WOULD NEED TO GO THROUGH MULTIPLE PORTALS IN A CHAIN, THEN END IT PERFECTLY ON YOURS, BUT I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I COULD MANAGE IT, LIKE THIS."

Spyro and Cynder exchanged looks with all the intensity and care of seasoned trade merchants. After a moment, she nodded, and he nodded right back.

"THEN, CLOSE IT," Spyro said, firmly. "CLOSE IT, AND SAVE IT FOR LATER."

"WE'RE NOT LEAVING YOU ALONE, OUT HERE," Cynder added. "NOT AFTER ALL THIS. YOU'RE ONE OF US."

Figment's massive eyes darted and bobbed, looking them over, taking in what they had said. Something bigger than even he had grown into formed in his throat.

"IF YOU STAY ON WITH ME, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT SORT OF PANDEMONIUM MIGHT ENSUE. JUST GOING INTO THE NEXT WORLD, WE'LL STILL BE UNBELIEVABLY BIG. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW WE'LL INTERACT WITH ANYTHING. YOU'RE BOTH SURE YOU'RE STAYING ON?"

"I WAS COOL WITH GOING HOME, WHEN ALL THE ADVENTURING WAS OVER WITH," Spyro huffed, folding his gargantuan arms, nearly unable to join them around his huge chest. "SO, MAKE FOR THE NEXT WORLD. I DRAINED OUR FRIEND HERE, HE'LL BE ALRIGHT."

Indeed, the dragon slumbered on, still well over a thousand feet tall. Compared to what he had been this morning, that was still something serious.

"WE'RE WITH YOU THROUGHOUT, FIGMENT," Cynder added, wagging slowly with a muscled tail. "WHAT GOOD WOULD IT BE GOING BACK, KNOWING WE LEFT YOU HERE?"

Figment swallowed the mass down, and nodded, blushing so hugely that they both felt the heat from it, with ease.

"HEH...WELL, OKAY! TOGETHER, THEN."

The portal shifted and wobbled...then grew, and grew, and grew, taking up more of the skies. Its higher rims pushed up and up, into the higher cloud banks, and as the villagers and kingdom and its confused neighbors all watched, the towering, landmass-sized dragons all shuffled through, with Figment slowly, deliberately working his staggering, musclebound enormity in last.

The following morning, the dragon awoke to find himself laying over a portion of an entire mountain. He chalked the matter up to a dream's fancy, before bolting up, and pinching his bulk, to find vast, dense brawn and a large, bulgy belly.

"GRACIOUS, HEAVENS, ME, IT *REALLY* HAPPENED..."

He looked around, seeing cratered footprints, scorch marks, and toppled forests all over. He shook his head, then got to work filling in craters, replanting the trees, and fixing what he could. As he did, the village watched, and as they watched, their opinion of the great beast steadily changed. The

door to the village finally, cautiously opened wide, and one by one, the tiny people began to filter out and join in, helping to remove the debris and add to what they might use to fix the town.

"OH," the dragon finally gasped, seeing the ant-sized populace pitching in to help. "OH!"

Smiling wide, he gave them all a towering nod and a salute, way up above. The tiny folks waved back, and the whole lot of them continued pleasantly on, the massive dragon starting up an echoing, rolling song (in an impossibly oversized falsetto).