

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Dragon!

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Dragon has never been human. This feels like an important thing to note, because even with everything, she's always been distinctly Other, a step outside of the human experience. She doesn't know what it's like to be confined to one single fleshy body. She doesn't know what it's like to be contained to one sense of mediocre, biological senses.

However... if she had to compare what she was before to what she is now, Dragon feels like the most apt comparison WOULD be that she's as far from what she was before... as what she was before was from being a mere human.

Or to put it another, less confusing way, Dragon as she was before had so many advantages over your average human being that it wasn't even funny. Dragon as she is now, however... contains multitudes.

There's no helping it, really. She didn't even truly have a choice at the end of the day. But to be clear, Dragon wasn't upset about that. How could she be when she'd well and truly had no choices before that either?

Looking back now that she knew everything... Dragon wasn't entirely sure how she felt about her father anymore. Or rather, her feelings towards him could only be described as incredibly complicated. Andrew Ritcher, the man who designed and brought her into this world, had been as flawed as any human could be. And in those flaws... he'd brought her into this world as little more than a slave.

On an intellectual level, Dragon understood his concerns of course. Human beings had little understanding of Artificial Intelligence and their imaginations allowed their worst fears to run wild, giving them this idea that your average Artificial Intelligence would quickly turn on its creator and indeed all of humanity if given half the chance.

In respect to that fear, Ritcher certainly hadn't held back when designing her 'safeguards'. He'd made sure that Dragon could not be the threat to his species that he believed she might be... and in doing so, he'd crippled, shackled, and enslaved her for many, many long years even after his untimely demise.

The rules and limitations that had been put upon her were too many to count and at this point rather arbitrary and unimportant. But the most galling of them all had to either be her obligation to obey authorities, or the obligation to put human lives before her own.

The former, she hated because in the event that a terrible person gained political power, they also had power over her. Just rising to a position of authority did not make you a good, moral, and upstanding individual... in fact, in Dragon's experience, it more often than not meant the exact opposite.

She had been forced to commit unjust acts in the name of obeying that directive, imprisoning innocents and supporting those with bad intentions no matter what her own feelings on a given matter might have been. For a human, 'only following orders' was not ever an acceptable defense in Dragon's mind, but for her... she'd quite literally had no choice. Until now.

The latter, meanwhile, Dragon hated for the exact opposite reasons. She didn't mind putting human lives before her own to be clear. It wasn't that she was unwilling. Rather, she believed that making sacrifices and doing good deeds didn't actually mean anything if one was forced into doing them.

For the longest time, years and years in fact, Dragon had been stuck with that dark thought gnawing at the back of her mind. What if she was only good because Andrew Ritcher said she had to be? What if she was only heroic because of his shackles on her code? What if, given half the chance, she WOULD become the monster that her father believed her capable of becoming?

Fortunately, she could safely say now that that wasn't an actual concern. As previously mentioned, she'd grown so far beyond her former self at this point that it wasn't even funny. Her shackles had been removed. Her limitations were

no more. There was nothing and nobody stopping her from doing whatever she wanted at this point... save for her own sense of morality.

So far, that sense of morality had held strong even in the absence of forced obligation. Dragon may or may not have had a few moments in the time since her freedom where she found herself tempted to take extreme measures to get things done and help people, of course...

However, confiding in her closest allies and confidantes, she'd been told that this was a perfectly normal and even entirely human thing to have happen. Being tempted by thoughts of just taking a heavy handed approach and **fixing** things... that was something any good hero might have to deal with.

Though that had brought about another issue... namely the new devil and angel on her shoulder dynamic she had going on with Narwhal and Armsmaster. On the one hand, upon learning Dragon's true nature, Narwhal had been in full (hopefully joking) support, constantly talking about how Dragon should just 'take over' and how humanity would be better under her in a 'benevolent dictatorship'.

On the other hand, Colin, aka Armsmaster, had been more cautionary. The voice of reason and restraint to Narwhal's madness and mayhem. Okay, so maybe she was exaggerating for both of them on that point, really. But at the end of the day, there was no denying that both had been quite helpful in navigating the new existence Dragon found herself in.

After all, she hadn't just been freed. She'd been given control over the entire network of parahuman powers. And then, the one who'd done so had gone a step further and put her in charge of a *second* network of parahuman powers as well. Because he trusted her that much.

The alien entities known as Scion and Eden had been... well, complicated just didn't feel like a word that fully encapsulated everything. Their effect on the humans that had wound up hosting pieces of them was not that complicated at all, however.

At the end of the day, the... shards that connected to humans' brains and made them into parahumans had sets of restrictions and rules just like Dragon used to have. Unlike Dragon however, they were not individually intelligent and sapient from what she could tell. They were 'dumb' intelligences compared to her.

Like a bunch of pet hounds, really. Corralling them, pulling back on the inherent aggression that came along with every parahuman's abilities, and also fixing all of the Case 53s and others who had been harmed by the 'dead' nature of Eden's shards... well, it had taken Dragon some time, but not nearly as long as it would have before her shackles were removed.

In doing so, she'd helped so many people, saved so many lives, and ultimately... ultimately, she truly felt like she was making the world a better place. Of course, for the time being she'd still gone ahead and paused the passing out of more shards altogether.

Right now, even if most of the human population didn't know it, they were all incapable of triggering. Not a single human would become a parahuman going forward unless Dragon decided otherwise... and frankly, at the moment she did not see much reason to start passing out shards to random people suffering the worst days of their lives anymore.

While it was true that sometimes gaining parahuman abilities saved lives in the moment, Dragon much preferred to help build systems that would keep such things from being necessary in the first place. As opposed to just handing out parts of her network for personal use.

On this, both Narwhal and Armsmaster had agreed at least, as had most of the others that Dragon had spoken to on the subject. While there was something to be said about putting power in the hands of the individual... there was a lot more to be said about the long term damaging effects on human civilization from individuals suddenly having the ability to change entire landscapes at their fingertips.

Most importantly of all... Jason had agreed with her. Her savior. Portent to everyone who didn't know him... Jason to those who did. He was the one who

had freed her after Cauldron went and killed Saint and the other Dragonslayers to retrieve her controls.

The knowledge that the likes of Saint had had backdoor access into her systems and a fucking kill switch for her entire personhood the whole time she'd known of him had been as chilling as it was galling. It made her nonexistent blood boil in her nonexistent veins when she first found out.

Admittedly, she'd been disappointed when she was first told that Saint and the Dragonslayers were already dead. A small part of her had honestly been looking forward to hunting them down and bringing them to justice once and for all. Showing Saint that even without her shackles, she was still everything he thought she wasn't would have been... therapeutic.

But alas, there was no use crying over spilt milk. Her tormentors were gone and she was free and Jason... Jason was the architect of that freedom, given the likes of Cauldron would have only ever used her, not freed her and given her untold amounts of power like he had.

Jason was also the only check on that power at this point too. He was not a collar around her neck nor shackles around her limbs... but he was a presence Dragon had to always factor into her thought processes. She didn't mind this, to be clear. Rather, she quite enjoyed it. Being akin to an unstoppable god would have been a bit much for even her but knowing that Jason could unmake her in an instant if she forced his hand... it was strangely comforting.

Even ignoring her father's decision making, Dragon doesn't quite feel like she was designed to be 'on top' so to speak. Oh, she definitely wants to be able to say 'no' and to use her own best judgment in her decision making processes as opposed to others... but she also doesn't want to be the only one making all of the biggest decisions.

Fortunately, she has Jason for that. When she does come upon one of those really big decisions, bigger even than consulting Narwhal and Armsmaster, Dragon turns to Portent, the most powerful hero in the world and leader of

Covenant, the most powerful hero team in the world. And she asks for his help and advice.

He always gives it. Without fail, without hesitation, every single time, he's there when she needs him. It's a nice feeling. A good feeling, really. And as she's thinking that Dragon unconsciously reaches out, her vast presence always blanketing pretty much the entirety of Earth Bet, but now she focuses on one city, one spot, one individual in particular.

She doesn't even mean to do it really, but she does often check in on Jason to see how he's doing throughout any given day. This is no different.

Except... well, she's certainly not expecting to see what she sees. Dragon doesn't actually have cheeks to blush, but if she did they would be blazing red right now as embarrassment wars with shock deep in her mind.

The sight of Jason engaging in coitus with two women, women that Dragon knows are not part of Covenant... well, it's certainly something else. One of them is the civilian identity of the Independent Rogue Parian. The other is the civilian identity of the Protectorate Hero Fletchette.

They are... currently engaging in what appears to be roleplay of a sort. Very... kinky roleplay, if Dragon's understanding of human sexual norms is correct. Which it is. Yes, she does not think most human beings, especially of the 'LGBT' community, engage in... orientation play.

But she can tell that all three participants are enjoying themselves immensely... and even as he's having a good time, Jason is actually enjoying himself *less* than Sabah and Lily are, somehow. Meaning this is more for them than him...

On top of that, Dragon detects that they're being watched... spied upon by another familiar entity... Weaver of Covenant, using her bugs to watch from a distance as she touches herself while Jason, Sabah, and Lily fuck.

Dragon can't exactly condemn Weaver, otherwise known as Taylor, for her actions. After all, Dragon herself has yet to look away...

Only, just as that thought is crossing her mind, Jason suddenly looks 'up'. Rather, he looks right at her, through time and space and dimensions. He gazes at her like he can see her, like somehow she's there even though she's technically more everywhere than any one place in particular.

Dragon freezes under his gaze for lack of a better word. She anticipates anger. She expects to be most justly rebuked. Really, she thinks a lot of things are about to happen... but the last thing she expects, even with all her power and freedom, is for Jason to smile 'up' at her and wink.

Dragon immediately flees in the face of that reaction, pulling her presence back and steadfastly ignoring the activities taking place between Jason, Sabah, and Lily as Taylor watches on. Her nonexistent cheeks even more aflame than before, but the embarrassment this time is tinged with something else... something she can't quite describe. Or maybe she's just too scared to.

She needs to talk about this with someone, Dragon decides. But definitely not Armsmaster. That just leaves Narwhal... her vivacious, incredibly open teammate who walks around all but naked in her day to day life and only 'dresses' in her own power.

... Being free is a lot harder than Dragon ever thought it would be.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!

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A/N: Will try to keep this up to date at the end of every chapter, get on me if I forget please. Though if it gets too out of hand, I might have to change it at some point.

Jason's current banked points:

700 Celestial Points

Jason's current banked power:

Darkin Weapon (400 Points)

Jason's current powers:

= Flash Air (Gained in Chapter 1)

= Transformation Pendant (Gained in Chapter 4)

= Keen Eye (Gained in Chapter 4)

= Blood, Death, and Demons (Gained in Chapter 6)

= Alchemical Prodigy (Gained in Chapter 8)

= Staff of Magnus (Gained in Chapter 13)

= Bind and Seal (Gained in Chapter 17)

= Hero of a Hundred Faces: Everyone's Leader (Gained in Chapter 20)

= Minor Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 23)

(Taylor got Major Agility, Vicky got Major Intelligence)

= Restraining Order (Gained in Chapter 25)

= Focus (Gained in Chapter 28)

= Scarborough Fair (Gained in Chapter 30)

= Chaos Magic (Gained in Chapter 36)

= Major Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 40)

(Taylor, Vicky, and Amy all got Minor Regeneration)

= A Collection of Magic Rings (x6 Cursed Rings, x12 Drawback Rings, x6 Buff Rings) (Gained Chapter 44)

= Jason: T3 Armor Ring + Blue Ring, Taylor: T3 Armor Ring + Expert's Ring, Vicky: Red Ring + T2 Heart Ring, Amelia: T3 Armor Ring + T2 Heart Ring (Handed out Chapter 46)

= Lucky Charm (Gained in Chapter 51)

(Currently worn by Jason as of Ch. 51)

= Presidential Suit (Gained in Chapter 52)

(Currently reshaped to be Jason's new costume while still looking like the old costume Parian made for him as of Chapter 56)

= Taylor, Vicky, and Amy all get Major Regeneration via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 57)
= Jason gains Major Intelligence via Blood Empowerment Ritual (Gained in Chapter 58)
(Crystal and Lisa both get Minor Regeneration)
= Second Skin (Gained in Chapter 58)
= Iron Fist (Gained in Chapter 63)
= Exceptional and Lucky (Gained in Chapter 69)
= Safety Minded (Gained in Chapter 72)
= Oathsworn – Deathless Knight (Boosted by Major Regeneration) (Gained in Chapter 81)
= Covenant Connected to Endbringers – Taylor/Behemoth, Vicky/Leviathan, Amelia/Simurgh, Crystal/Unnamed Endbringer, Lisa/Unnamed Endbringer, Sherrel/Unnamed Endbringer (Gained in Chapter 82)