

Two young dragons glided through the air, their faces contorted with worry and fear. No older than two years, they flew as quickly as they could away from their home in the mountains. Their vast dark wings, the undersides spattered with flecks of white and gold, spread and flapped clumsily through the air, slowing them down and betraying their lack of experience with flight. As the moon rose high in the sky, their vibrant gold and yellow scaled undersides provided them with little camouflage. Although at least their scales faded to black above their wings and on their backs, with only the faintest hints of deep emerald green streaks tinting their scales, which would hopefully give pursuers a difficult time finding them.

One spoke out to the other, her voice barely more than a whisper in the breeze, her cold grey eyes reflecting the moonlight.

“Shining Star, where are we going?” She fretted.

“I don’t know, Pale Sky.” Shining Star replied, her voice firmer than her sister’s. “But we had to leave.” She insisted.

“We could’ve done so much more...” Pale Sky said regretfully.

“Like what?” Shining Star snapped, her voice raising to be easily heard above the wind. “If we stayed, we would’ve ended up like our mother. Dead. Father, Blazing Fire, he got so unpredictable after our brother died. We weren’t safe there to begin with, and now we have even less reason to stay.”

“I didn’t mean it like that.” Pale Sky retorted. “I meant before all of that. Maybe... maybe we could’ve helped Brightest Night somehow. Listened closer to his ramblings. It may have seemed like nonsense, but he was still our brother, and we should’ve tried to hear him out.” Pale Sky explained, her voice softening as she looked her sister in the eyes.

Shining Star sighed. “There was nothing we could’ve done, Pale Sky. He was always distant, and in the months leading up to when he... died, he grew mad. There was no telling why, he simply started talking to us less, and whenever he did, it never made sense. We couldn’t have stopped what happened.” She said, trying to convince both her sister and herself that what she was saying was true.

The two dragons flew on in silence for several more minutes, slowly losing altitude as they descended into a forest of pine trees.

They stopped when they landed, looking around in awe of the foliage that surrounded them and the trees that towered over them.

“So these are *trees*.” Shining Star said quietly, the word sounding strange and new as she spoke it. Her mother had once told her and Pale Sky about trees and forests, but their talk had ended on the bitter note of why she and Pale Sky would never see them. “Our mother was wrong, this is a whole forest. And we’re standing right in the middle of it.” She announced.

“I never expected trees to be so... *big!*” Pale Sky exclaimed, craning her neck back to look up at the thin, dark green pine needles that clung to the tree branches above.

The orange pine needles covering the ground felt prickly under their talons, but it was much softer and almost bouncy compared to the hard cold stone of the cave they had known all their lives.

“Come on,” Shining Star said, turning to Pale Sky. “We have to keep going. We can still see the mountains from here.” She said as she nodded towards the pale grey shape that smudged the horizon as the moon began to fall behind it and early dawn light drew a few birds out to sing their morning songs, melodies that had never before touched the ears of the two frightened sisters making their way through the forest. They didn’t know where they’d end up next, they only knew that it *had* to be better than the mountains.