

Chapter 28

Back in one of the castle's highest towers, Cessilia's fierce fight against Jisel and her Red Dragon had gotten more violent, more... beastly. Combined with the Princess' new appearance, she was also seemingly much stronger.

The young Red Dragon kept pouncing on her like a cat trying to kill a rat, but she just wasn't letting herself be killed. Cessilia was moving fast, like a dragon, slithering through the attacks, fighting back as if her opponent wasn't a furious creature three times her size. The claws kept digging through the stone, wrecking what was once a gorgeous banquet hall, now reduced to two walls and a large mountain of rubble. As most of the roof had been brought down, a lot of the rain was pouring in, making the whole floor quite easy to slip on when it wasn't unstable from all the debris scattered around. Each time Cessilia found herself against a wall, she had to watch just as much for the dragon as she did for the falling of broken bricks. Still, she wasn't retreating from this fight. Her new, shining silver scales were glowing like a light in the darkness, beautiful and eerie on her skin. She had taken off most of her armor and her Dragon Blood was now taking over in making her skin thicker, tougher. The external injuries were closing up and healing at an incredible speed, but she could still feel the vivid pain inside. Her organs weren't as quick to heal as her skin was, so she couldn't move at her full speed, but she sure was trying.

Jinn had to find ways to relentlessly attack her while also finding a precarious equilibrium on the tower the rest of its body was gradually ruining. This banquet hall was absolutely not the right size to welcome one whole dragon, even a young one, and the Red Dragon was just destroying everything mindlessly. Cessilia wouldn't have cared less about Jinn destroying the whole tower, if it wasn't for the fact that she was still in it and feeling the tower getting less and less stable. Somehow, the

dragon's lower body also kept scratching the lower floors as it tried to climb, and all the jumping and scratching was causing the whole building to become off-balance, weakening it. The more she fought, ran, and jumped to fight back against the unruly dragon, the less stable she felt the ground under her. If she didn't finish this soon, chances were the whole tower would collapse, and Dragon Blood couldn't save a crushed body...

The fighting itself was already hard enough as it was. Few men could have ever claimed to have fought a dragon alone, and Cessilia was probably the only woman capable of doing so. She was fierce, grunting and groaning everytime she thrust her sword. Her anger was on par with Jinn's furious growls, the two of them fighting like irate beasts wanting nothing more than to rip each other apart. The large claws got very close to her many times, sometimes ripping the floor and digging several inches into the stone right next to her legs. Every time Jinn pounced on her, Cessilia would retaliate by slicing the dragon or piercing it. Her sword was hanging on just fine, and as it was made of dragon claw, it could pierce the Red Dragon's skin while making big holes, not just a clean cut like a normal blade would have. Even if it wasn't always as deep and large as she had hoped, bit by bit, more and more injuries were appearing on Jinn's body. The dragon was getting madder each time, trying to kill her even more vehemently, forcing Cessilia to be on the move always. She couldn't get a single second of rest, aside from the very few times she managed to jump away or run to the opposite side. She could barely catch her breath and wipe the sweat and rain off her face before she had to get moving again. It was a dance of death, in which whoever slowed down saw their blood shed.

Her hair was drenched, and she had ripped apart the hem of her dress that hindered her already. There wasn't much left of the original outfit, leaving Cessilia covered only by some purple armor and her silver-magenta scales more than the dark brown pieces of fabric. It was better for her though as it made her movements easier, and she needed any mobility she could get. The rain was dripping down her whole body, soaking the ground and slowly transforming the floor of the former hall into a water rink. Despite how fast she moved and how careful she was, Cessilia slid several times

against the wet stone, almost impaling herself on the dragon's fangs a couple of times. She was only glad her Dragon Blood was more fired up than ever. The piles of debris would have ruined her feet and legs with multiple scratches if they weren't already covered in scales. There were few portions of the hall left that weren't covered by broken stones and debris, and she had to navigate through the mess while fighting a dragon that couldn't have cared less. Jinn had no issues climbing over the hills of broken walls to jump on her, fangs first, and try to bite her head or arm off. Cessilia had to run, dive behind whatever obstacle she could find between her and the dragon and find the first occasion to retaliate. Despite being at a clear disadvantage, the Princess was unrelenting, and not giving the beast an easy fight. Cessilia was stronger, fiercer than ever, and didn't back down, even when she was injured again. It happened after she had tripped once more and almost ripped her foot open on some sharp piece of metal. She fell down to the side, and immediately rolled on the ground to avoid being impaled by one of Jinn's sharp claws by less than an inch.

When she jumped back on her feet, out of breath but sword ready, her entire right flank was bleeding out, covered in many little and middle-sized cuts. Immediately, the fresh wounds were quickly covered by a new shimmer of silver scales, her skin fighting the injuries with her as fast as the eye could see. The more that fight continued, the less human she looked. Silver scales were now covering more than half of her visible skin, and at each bolt of lightning that enlightened the sky, her scales shimmered too.

“Just get rid of her already!” shouted Jisel, furious. “Just kill her!”

Cessilia wasn't going to let herself be killed, not so easily. That measly dragon didn't scare her one bit, and she refused to lose against Jisel. Every time she had to jump to avoid the dragon's attack, she made sure to keep an eye on that woman. Cessilia could forgive the dragon, perhaps, but she wasn't going to let Jisel get away with it twice. That woman had chosen her path, now it was time she paid for it.

“...Just come out and fight me yourself then!” she grunted, raising her sword again.

Jinn furiously growled, and Cessilia saw the dragon take a large, deep breath that couldn't mean anything good. She ran to hide behind a pile of wreckage and covered her head seconds before the large, hot flames burst out. The heat rose in a blink, and Cessilia felt the flames lick her arms, her legs, and everything around. The dragon's furious fiery breath lasted for just a few terrifying seconds. Although her body had some immunity to it thanks to the Dragon Blood, she knew a dragon's fire was too powerful. She tried to endure it, feeling her silver scales rush to heal as fast as they got burned, trying to keep her alive despite the cataclysmic fire directed against her. Cessilia tried to protect her face, but she felt every part of her body itching, burning terribly. It was only a matter of seconds, but those seconds felt way too long. When it finally stopped, she was still way too hot, and she could smell burnt flesh. She looked at her limbs, relieved to see several thick layers of scales had appeared to protect the exposed parts. Then, she smelled flames still burning, and realized some of her hair had caught fire. Without hesitation, Cessilia grabbed the locks and cut it off. Some of her hair was now cut to neck length, but she didn't have the time to wonder how it looked. She immediately began running, ignoring the pain still stinging her forearm and legs, and jumped, aiming for Jinn's back.

Cessilia knew dragons spitting fire had to take a few seconds to calm down, and she had to use that time. She violently stabbed her whole sword through the dragon's left flank, and half a second later, Jinn's furious growl thundered. Disoriented by the pain that pierced its flesh, the Red Dragon writhed erratically, more violent than ever. It sent Cessilia flying off of its back, separating her from the sword still planted in its back. She felt herself hit the ground violently one second before Jisel's scream echoed her dragons. Cessilia grimaced. With the speed and violence she had landed, even if the floor had been cleared of debris, it would have been painful, but now, she could feel several parts of her body in a tremendous amount of pain. Luckily, she wasn't the only one. Still panicked by the weapon planted in its back, Jinn kept squirming and groaning, the Red Dragon going into a complete frenzy. The crazy rampage was just about destroying anything left in the room, spilling

debris everywhere and collapsing the remaining walls. Still lying on her stomach, Cessilia tried to raise her head with a groan of pain, her green eyes immediately falling on the doors leading to the lower floors which had miraculously kept standing until then. If she entertained any dream of escaping this way, they were brutally crushed. In its madness, Jinn wrecked them, and the wall collapsed on it, along with whatever was left behind. Cessilia let out an annoyed groan. Now she was truly trapped here, unless the rest of the tower collapsed... which didn't seem impossible. Jinn's rampage hadn't just damaged the remaining walls, the floor was now literally swaying under them. Cessilia's heart dropped to her stomach as she felt the tower tilt more and more. By reflex, she grabbed the first hole she could find in the ground, and held on, hoping this would stop soon. Sadly, it wasn't. She heard a terrible sound somewhere beneath, something akin to a landslide or an earthquake, and the ground under her kept tilting and tilting. She could feel her body getting pushed toward the edge, leaning dangerously to the side that was collapsing. If she let go, just for a second, her body would inevitably slide down and fall off of the tower... She closed her eyes, trying to calm her crazy heartbeat and the blood pulsing in her head. She didn't even want to think about whether the sea or the rest of the castle was waiting below. All the Dragon Blood in the world wouldn't be able to save her from such a fall.

“Ha!”

Cessilia forced herself to look in the opposite direction. Annoyed, she saw Jisel, holding on to her dragon herself and, with her free hand, wielding Cessilia's dragon claw sword she had left in the wound. She had visibly ripped it out, waving around the blood-soaked weapon while her dragon had calmed down a bit. Jinn was still furiously growling, its wound bleeding out and the red body squirming still, arched as an indication of its suffering.

“What is it, Princess? Can't keep up after all?” she mocked her.

“Stop it, Jisel!” Cessilia shouted back. “Both you and your dragon are going to die! If you stop now, we might spare you!”

“Shut up! Look at you, Princess, you’re about to die! And you want me to beg for mercy? Fuck no! I have come this far by bowing to everyone, and now, I have a Dragon Princess groveling under me! I’m going to watch you die, and then I’ll show Ashen how he picked the wrong, weak woman!”

“I’m not weak,” grunted Cessilia.

She used the strength in her arms and tried to pull herself up, working her muscles all she could to win just a few inches up. The tower was leaning so badly, it was even impressive it was still standing. The top of the building could just collapse at any moment, and Cessilia could hear the stones slowly creaking and about to crumble underneath. She could only use the strength of her arms to hold on, painfully. Steps away and somehow above her, Jisel was holding on to her dragon, ready to jump on and fly off the second the tower finally collapsed. Cessilia glared at her. She refused to not finish this fight.

“A fitting end for a coward princess,” scoffed Jisel, getting more brazen from her position. “You’ll die alone, a defeat fitting for the pathetic excuse of a War God’s daughter!”

Cessilia’s green eyes glared even more furiously. Almost all of her skin was covered in blood and silver scales by now, and only the two green gems could be seen in the midst of her wet hair stuck to her face. Despite her position, her body almost completely hanging above the ground, there wasn’t an ounce of fear in them.

Far, far below, she could hear the clamor of the men fighting, the terrible sounds of a war that was spreading throughout the island. The thunder was beating like drums above them as if to give rhythm to the ongoing battles. But even louder were the waves crashing against the rocks below. Cessilia frowned and glanced down. The sea sounded almost as furious as the roaring sky. Ignoring Jisel, she listened some more, something suddenly pulling her attention. A sound, something familiar yet foreign, coming like a muted echo. Her heartbeat accelerated again. Her blood rushed through her veins, and an excited chill went down her spine. She could hear it. Below the furious roars of the raging sea, far past the edges

of the island. Lightning struck the sky again and when Jisel looked down at Cessilia, prepared to see her give up or beg for help, she was shocked to find the Princess smiling.

“I’m no coward, Jisel. You are.”

Then, she suddenly let go. Silence dropped on the area, and Jisel watched the Princess’ body fall off of the tower, almost in slow motion. Cessilia fell backwards, facing the sky and her eyes locked on Jisel with a scary satisfied expression. Snapped up by the void underneath, her body floated in the air, in a cross, and she slowly closed her eyes, disappearing in the shadows of the building, toward the seething sea.

That’s the precise moment the building chose to collapse. In a crescendo of rock breaking sounds, it slowly fell apart, collapsing in parts and taking the floors below down with it. Jisel only had time to hop on to her dragon as Jinn flapped its small wings to get above the wreckage. She watched an entire portion of the castle fall below them into large clouds of dust. Some parts violently hit and damaged other parts of the castle, but most fell into the surrounding sea, disappearing into the waves. Jisel didn’t care at all for the tower. Her eyes were relentlessly looking for one woman’s silhouette. It made no sense that she would have survived this. Not only because a fall from such a height should have killed her, but even if she somehow survived, the collapsing bricks and stones should have buried her in the waves. No one could survive that. ...So why did she have the feeling the Princess had survived anyway? She had clearly chosen to let go. What kind of madness had prompted that jump? Jisel kept looking through the waves, as the tower had finished collapsing, reduced to a shapeless mountain on one side of the castle. The sea was unusually restless too, as if it was preparing to grow and eat up the nearby islands. That Princess had to have drowned by now! Still, Jisel couldn’t breathe properly, her anxiety soaring.

Her eye caught something. Under the water. It was just a glimpse, out of the corner of her eye, but she was almost sure she had seen something shining... a shimmer of silver. A cold chill went down her spine, and she jumped in fright as the thunder suddenly boomed above.

Then, she heard it very clearly. The high-pitched, almost metallic scream of a water dragon. Jisel opened her eyes wide, fear filling her expression. It couldn't be. She heard it again, even louder. It was as if it was coming from the entire sea below, the water acting like a fearsome echo chamber for a very large creature. She grabbed her dragon and prompted it to get away, quickly. Jinn was getting nervous too.

Suddenly, a gigantic wave burst out of the sea, climbing high toward the sky. In the midst of it, a large creature suddenly soared, letting out that furious scream from before, even clearer and more piercing. A gigantic water dragon, with silver scales shimmering like diamonds, and furious, dark pink ruby eyes. The mythical creature extended its wings, flapping them like an icy cold mist whipping the air, and screamed again in fury, showing its snow white but sharp fangs. On the top of its head, Cessilia was standing, the blood washed off her body, her scales the same color and her eyes cold as ice.

“...We're not done, Jisel.”

She saw the other woman's expression fall, very quickly, from shock to absolute terror. Jisel grabbed her dragon's head, and pulled it to fly away as fast as it could and away from her. Cessilia glared at the fleeing figure of the Red Dragon, but first, she got down on her knees, putting her hands on the Silver Dragon's head.

“...I missed you so much, Cece,” she muttered in a cry. “Thank you for coming back...”

Her dragon answered with that unique, metallic scream unlike any other dragon. Cece wasn't like any other dragon anymore, and the Silver Dragon was absolutely magnificent. Its scales were like thousands of perfectly shaped jewels on its body, shimmering everytime the light hit them. They were incredibly cold too, perhaps because Cece had emerged from the sea, and they looked almost like ice gems under her fingers. Her dragon was three times bigger than Cessilia remembered, and its wings too, were effortlessly flapping in the sky, grand and capable of keeping the large body flying without a problem. Cece was effortlessly hanging in the sky like a silver cross visible from all sides of the Capital. To Cessilia,

though, nothing mattered more than those gorgeous ruby eyes, staring right back at her. It was as if they had parted just yesterday. Despite the new, grand appearance, it was still her Cece underneath, her dragon which she felt more connected to than ever.

From where she stood, it was difficult to spot, but Cessilia did notice the large, burgundy mark on her dragon's throat. It was one perfect line, almost like a collar, but to her, it had a terrible significance. As if, even if she had retrieved her dragon, this scar was to stay as a reminder never to make the same mistake again. Cessilia sighed. She had no idea why Cece had come back so different, but she could feel their bond stronger than before. Her dragon was stronger than before. Like the Sea Dragon God of the legend, the Silver Dragon was flying above the sea with shining scales and an imposing presence. Cessilia could almost feel the power in each movement, and she could feel, deep inside, Cece's strength adding to hers. They were one, once again. Her dragon flapped its gorgeous wings, taking a more horizontal position, and she sat on its nape.

It didn't take long to find Jinn; the Red Dragon's figure was standing out against the dark gray and blue background of the raging sea and thundering storm above them. Cece let out another unique high-pitched growl, and jumped down in that direction. Either Jinn felt the other dragon coming or was trying to flee anyway, but both dragons accelerated, and the hunt quickly began in the sky.

It was a furious race against one another. Cessilia had to hang on to her dragon or, at the speed Cece was going, she'd be violently thrown off. Still, she kept both eyes open and fixed right ahead at Jisel and her Red Dragon. Unlike them, the connection between those two was obviously off. In fact, whenever Cece got close enough, Cessilia could hear Jisel's furious screams, and see the fear in Jinn's eyes. The Red Dragon was just terrified. Cece was much, much bigger and in a predatory position too. Claws out, if the Silver Dragon got close enough, no doubt blood would soon flow. As young of a dragon as Jinn was, its goal was most likely to survive and protect Jisel too. Sadly, that woman looked beyond mad now. Something seemed to have snapped in her, enough for her to curse at her

dragon that was fleeing this fight. Either she truly believed they had a chance, or she just refused to back down, she was just vociferating at Cessilia and Cece, shouting for Jinn to turn around and fight. That wouldn't happen as long as the Red Dragon was in its right mind.

“Get them, Cece.”

Her dragon let out another long scream in the sky and accelerated again.

The two water dragons' bodies seemed to be dancing in the sky now, their wings flapping at a quick speed to try and hunt or flee the other. They didn't hesitate to dash through the thick, humid clouds, or fly low to the Capital's rocks. It was a terrifying game of hunt, or even hide-and-seek. Every time Jinn tried to find a place to hide, to cover itself, Cece would inevitably appear, with those ruby eyes glowing in anger. The Silver Dragon was now mimicking its mistress' wrath, and just wouldn't stop until it got its prey. The two of them flew in between the bridges, and even dived into the sea. Perhaps Jinn had hoped to swim faster than Cece, but it turned out to be another mistake. In fact, with its wings closed and its body slithering quickly, Cessilia's dragon was even faster as a swimmer. The raging waves were no problem, and the dragons brutally clashed for the first time underwater.

The impact was violent. Cessilia had just enough time to take a deep breath in, and when her dragon suddenly attacked Jinn, she almost breathed it out from the sudden impact. A thick trail of blood appeared in the water. Cece was like a snake, trying to use that long silver body to corner Jinn and find the first opportunity to violently bite. The Red Dragon growled furiously and fought back, unwilling to admit defeat. The violent exchange ensued for several seconds but soon, Jinn somehow managed to get away, and Cece swam back to the surface so Cessilia could breathe.

When they breached the surface, the Princess took a deep breath in, grateful. Holding her breath so long underwater sure was different when she had to hold on to a rowdy dragon at the same time... She pushed her hair back, suddenly remembering it was half-cut.

“Let’s go up,” she said.

Cece immediately obeyed and flew up again, away from the waves. Jinn wasn’t in sight anymore, but the duo couldn’t have gone far. All their surroundings were in view, and Cessilia suspected they had found a temporary hideout. Pulling on her dragon to direct its movements, she got Cece to fly above the rest of the Capital. She looked for her allies at the same time as they searched for Jinn. She spotted the two distinct battlefields and, a bit more worrying, the numerous fires that were spreading across the Capital. Ashen’s home was bleeding out... Luckily, it looked like the situation was tilting to their side. Downtown, a large but ravaged battlefield was clearly more dominated by the locals than the Yekara colors. Cessilia even recognized her brothers, and Tessandra, all three of them absorbed in their fighting, but still raising their heads when they saw her or heard Cece. She was too high to see their expressions, but she was glad they all seemed fine... Moreover, her dragon was still focused on its prey, and barely glanced down toward the humans fighting below. With another impatient and irritated growl, Cece did a new loop around the Capital. Feeling her dragon’s impatience, Cessilia was looking all around too. It was quite nerve-wracking. The difference in size between the two dragons was huge, but if Jinn found a way to hide, this hunt could potentially last a while, and that was the opposite of what Cessilia wanted. She wanted to end this fight soon and return to Ashen’s side to check on him. That whole battle against Jisel had lasted too long already.

Suddenly, a furious growl came from behind and above them. Cessilia felt the sudden wind blowing from behind, and turned around just in time to see Jinn jumping on them, all claws out.

Cece didn’t have time to turn around, but Cessilia did. Without hesitation, she grabbed her smaller blade and plunged it into the Red Dragon’s incoming paw, impaling it to the hilt. Jinn let out a furious growl of pain, but not without managing to scratch Cece with its other paw. However, the Silver Dragon wouldn’t have it. Furious, Cece turned around and violently bit back, its fangs crushing Jinn’s front paw in one bite.

“My dragon!” shouted Jisel, furious.

“If you’re sorry for him, come and fight yourself!” retorted Cessilia.

She pulled back the blade, the only weapon she had left, and violently kicked the Red Dragon’s snout before it could even think of trying to bite her. Jinn growled and tried to retreat, but Cece wouldn’t let go of its limb. Dragon blood suddenly rained down as the two intertwined dragons battled one another furiously, one trying to get away, the other refusing to let go. It had become a chaotic mess of scales and blood flying, ferocious growls and dragon screams. Cessilia tried to run down the dragon’s back to get to Jisel, but everytime she moved, the two dragons changed positions again, making her lose her balance. She could only hold on to Cece every time, or risk being thrown off. Jisel, on the other hand, had barely moved, if not to retreat away from Cece’s fangs now digging into her poor dragon’s shoulder. By now, it had bitten down on more than enough of the Red Dragon’s flesh, and they could hear the sounds of bones being crushed under the pressure. Cessilia couldn’t help but feel a bit sorry for Jinn’s suffering.

“Cece!” she shouted.

Her dragon grunted, and brutally ripped off that foreleg. Cece spat it out while the injured Jinn was retreating, completely terrified, its limbless shoulder pouring thick dragon blood into the river. Cece let out another long scream, and flew back to face Jinn, showing off its still blood-stained fangs.

“Get the hell down from that dragon, Jisel,” Cessilia said, “or I’ll have to kill him too.”

Jisel’s horrified eyes were on the dragon’s injury. If she felt sorry for Jinn, she also looked more worried for herself, and how her dragon looked like it wouldn’t be able to defend her for much longer.

“You wish!” she screamed. “This dragon is mine! He’s mine and he will defend me even if he has to die doing it! That’s the only thing he’s worthy of! That’s the only reason I kept him!”

Cessilia glared at her. She could see Jisel's survival instincts building up in a horrible manner. That was the look of a woman absolutely terrified by the mere idea of her death. She wouldn't give up, ever. The only way of life she knew was to survive, at absolutely any cost. She would lie, run, hide, cheat all she could rather than give up or die. Even if she had to sacrifice a loyal dragon in the process. Cessilia took a deep breath, and slowly, put her open palm against Cece's cold body. She could feel all of her dragon's emotions like her own... Impatience, frustration, stubbornness, resolve. The rage built up from the adrenaline of the fight. Anger, and that strong desire to protect Cessilia too. The disgust of the taste of dragon blood... Cece was sick of this fight too.

"...We need to separate those two," muttered Cessilia.

Her dragon growled in agreement. Cece was mad at that brat that refused to submit and kept running away. Dragons weren't meant to run away or avoid fights. If it knew it were the weaker one, it should have simply conceded defeat, and this would have all been over. This whole chasing and hunting of a peer was annoying, frustrating. Moreover, the dragon and its mistress' anger were directed at the same person: that mad woman on the Red Dragon's back. Cece was mirroring Cessilia's anger toward her, and her conflicted feelings toward the unfortunate Red Dragon. The pair understood each other perfectly with just a few words and a touch.

Jisel then proceeded to have Jinn turn around and fly away again. Of course, the Red Dragon was trying to get as far away from Cece as possible and delay its inevitable demise. Cece didn't start the chase right away, but instead let out another long scream, and took some height above the fleeing Red Dragon. Jinn was considerably slowed down by the terrible injury. Its flying didn't look as precise as before, almost as if it was on the verge of collapse. It was flying lower and lower and, at the right moment, Cece dove. The Silver Dragon came down from the sky like another lightning bolt, and the hit was just as brutal. Cessilia had to stick to her dragon's back for the impact, and even like this, she was brutally ejected. Luckily, her body landed on the sand, right below them. Irony had it that they were back on the beach where she and her brothers

had let Jisel live once before. The tide had already washed away all traces of the previous fight, and the sand was wet under their feet. Cessilia felt the waves caress her ankles as she quickly jumped back on her feet.

She heard the screams of two dragons fighting, and the waves of sand violently thrown in all directions. The fight was incredibly brutal, with their bodies rolling in the sand, silver and red scales mixed at such a speed, she could barely see who was on top. From her dragon's angry growls, Cessilia could tell hers was mad and frustrated, but not in pain. Jinn was desperately trying to survive the attacks, and Cece was trying not to kill. It was absolute chaos, but in the midst of this, there was no way Jisel was still on her dragon's back. Cessilia looked around and spotted her on all fours in the sand, yards away from her, almost on the other end of the beach. She must have been hurt from the fall, seeing how that woman struggled to get back up. As soon as her eyes met Cessilia's, though, she found the strength to stand up again and run. This time, she couldn't fly away, and she was cornered on the beach. Only the distance and the two dragons fighting between them kept Cessilia away from her.

"...Ah," Cessilia heard her laugh. "You're too weak, Princess! Too weak to kill another dragon, aren't you?! Look! Jinn will fight for me to the end, and you'll let him kill your dragon because you're so weak!"

"...No," Cessilia muttered. "Not again."

She turned her green gaze to the two dragons. As if they had heard the two women, the two of them separated, still furiously growling at each other, but putting a bit of a distance between one another. Even if they didn't finish, Cece was the clear winner. The Silver Dragon only had a few bite marks bleeding on random spots of its body, and a slight limp in its rear paw, but that was it. Jinn, on the other end, was in a pitiful state. On top of its ripped off limb, the Red Dragon was also now missing a large portion of its left wing and eye, and had deep lacerations all over. The red of its blood was transforming its scales into a darker red shade, and staining the sand beneath. Upon seeing Cece retreat, it kept growling, slowly retreating toward Jisel with a defensive stance.

Meanwhile, Cece's silver body curled up around Cessilia, still letting out furious warning growls right back at Jinn. However, the Silver Water Dragon was obediently standing behind its mistress, leaving her the space to walk up closer to Jinn. The Red Dragon didn't seem much more enthusiastic to face the woman. It kept retreating, looking like it didn't know which one of the pair to growl at.

Cessilia kept marching toward the dragon, a bit exhausted by all the fighting, her arms sore from hanging on to Cece so tightly, but incredibly calm and composed. In fact, her glowing green eyes were somewhat scaring Jinn more than her dragon counterpart. The closer she came, the more the Red Dragon felt the need to retreat and growl. It was obvious its goal was still to protect Jisel somehow, but fear was dominating in its eyes.

"That woman doesn't deserve to have a dragon," Cessilia muttered, addressing the dragon itself.

"You don't decide that!" shouted Jisel. "This dragon only survived thanks to me! I'm the reason Jinn is alive, and he has to protect me, like my brother should have! He'll die for me if he has to!"

"No," Cessilia muttered.

She walked even closer, and this time, Jinn's growling turned more serious, the dragon taking a step toward her, getting ready to fight her again if needed. Behind Cessilia, Cece kept growling in warning too, but the Silver Dragon didn't move to defend its mistress.

Cessilia suddenly got within range, and Jinn attacked. The Red Dragon jumped on her, its claws missing her by a bit as she jumped to the side. With one of its legs missing, its landing completely failed, and it rolled on its injured shoulder, making the dragon scream in pain.

"...No dragon should have to die for its owner."

Suddenly, Cessilia stood back up, and took a deep breath in. Jinn tried to jump back on its feet, fangs out and ready to bite, but before it did, Cessilia suddenly blew out a gigantic blast of snow and ice.

The Red Dragon was violently swept back, its body hitting the external wall of the cave, and it stopped there, lying on the ground. Cessilia slowly turned to a speechless Jisel and, in an attempt to protect its owner once more, Jinn pitifully tried to stand up. That's when Cece jumped in, and just like Cessilia, suddenly blew an impressive amount of snow and ice on the Red Dragon. Except, it was much bigger and more powerful, and soon, most of Jinn's body was trapped in large blocks of ice.

Meanwhile, Cessilia took out her dagger and calmly approached Jisel, who was still stunned, her eyes on her dragon. She shook her head frantically, and fell back, not even trying to run.

"Th-that can't be," she muttered, sobbing. "That's not a water d-dragon. It can't be... a... a..."

"...An Ice Dragon."