

FLAME RIS



Grade	9th
Fiction	X
Poetry	
Nonfiction	

Preface

8 years ago

The pounding of foot falls could be heard from miles away. She had already cast the spell so they couldn't find her lair, but every spell has flaws. She would give her life to protect what she was hiding.

"I can't let them find it." She mumbled, frantically hiding the object under yet another spell. As the footsteps got closer, she closed her eyes, her hand over the nest; the last of the dragon eggs.

Chapter 1

"Shepperd you idiot! Your other left!"

The red-head ducked just as a bar came out, almost hitting him in the face. Believe me, training wasn't the easiest thing in the world. You're probably wondering, *what are we training for?* Well, it's to kill dragons. The only thing is, we've never seen a real one before. They had been hunted to almost extinction: King's orders. There hadn't been one spotted in years, and yet, they were still training dragon slayers... like the four of us: Shepperd, Iris, Red, and me.

"Sombré! Heads up!" I heard Iris yell. I looked over to see an ice spike headed right for me. I jumped, but not in time. It nailed me in the right shoulder, making a hiss escape my lips as white-hot pain spread through me. At that point, the machines had powered down. I yanked the spike out, quickly putting pressure on the wound, seeing as it was gushing blood. A large, warm hand rested on my uninjured shoulder.

"We should probably get *you* to the infirmary." A deep voice spoke beside me: Red. Now, don't misunderstand his name. He's definitely a brunette. The way he earned his name was through his eyes: where one was beautiful emerald green, the other was startling scarlet. Being the kind-hearted person he is, he escorted me to the infirmary.

"Oh dear." A soft murmur came from one of the nurses. She quickly led me to a hospital bed, grabbed the rubbing alcohol and gauze.

"You're going to need stiches." She said.

"I figured." I responded, lying back. Those ice spikes were not kind. Every slayer who had been through training knew that; if they had gotten hit by one, that is. At that moment, Iris walked in, her long black braid swinging down her back.

"General Skye called us four into a meeting once you're patched up." She said in her slight Indian accent. Red's eyebrows furrowed. I sighed, resting my head back against the pillow. Whenever you got called into a meeting with the general, you were usually in big trouble. If I knew anything, it was that this was *not* going to end well.

The four of us sat in General Skye's office, waiting for the crap storm to start. The nurse had patched up my shoulder, and put me on pain meds. It was perfectly numbed now. The general walked in, all hard lines and scars, her silver hair swishing around her shoulders.





"Do you know why you're here?" she asked. It was silent for a few moments, all of us too terrified to speak.

Finally, Shepperd answered, his voice shaking. "Is it because we forgot to clean the weapons again?"

The general sighed, her serious face cracking into a small grin as she shook her head at him. "For once, no."

We all let out a collective sigh. If that wasn't it, then what could we have done?

She eyed us for a few seconds before speaking again. "I'm sending you four on a mission."

To say we were shocked, was an understatement.

"What?!" Red jumped to his feet.

"That's right, you heard me." Skye replied.

"What exactly is the mission?" I asked.

Skye slammed a photo down on the table before us. "We've been hunting this sorceress. Her name is Catrina Storm. We believe that she is hiding the last of the dragons. I want you to find her... and kill her."

"Um, Ma'am?" I started. "How am I supposed to hunt on this big of a mission when I'm injured?"

"It never stopped me, did it?" the general raised her eyebrow.

"No." I muttered, looking at my feet.

"Good!" she clapped making us all jump. "You all leave tomorrow morning!"

We started protesting, but she raised a hand, effectively shutting us up.

"No arguments. Go shower, then hit the sack. You'll need your energy." And then she left. When the four of us looked at each other, I could tell we were all thinking the same thing; "Well crap."

Chapter 2

My shoulder was burning. Right now, I was nearly cursing the general for sending us on this mission. Windy, the horse I was riding, was the tamest one we had, but it didn't make the journey any less rough. Red, being the person he is, was riding his black stallion in circles around Iris, and judging by the look on her face, she was about two seconds away from strangling him.

"For God's sake, Red!" Shepperd hollered. Red started snickering, but stopped riding in circles. I rolled my eyes. The four of us had a strange dynamic. If you looked at our friendship from an outsider's perspective, you'd wonder how we all got along, we were so different. Currently, we were going west, into the Paynestine forest, as we were directed, but for some reason, it felt like the right way to go anyway. We hit another bump and I hissed in frustration, as my shoulder was jolted.

"You okay?" Shepperd slowed his horse down to keep pace with mine.

"Even if I wasn't, I don't have a choice in this matter." I grumbled.

"Calm your sass." He snickered. I rolled my eyes at him.



"Hey, do you guys feel that?" Iris yelled. She brought her horse to a stop, the rest of us following suit. It was dead silent, with us trying to feel what Iris had. That's when it happened, a low, deep pulse went through the air, the kind of thing you felt deep in your bones.

"Should we follow it?" I asked.

"I think so." Red responded.

So, we did, until we came to a sheer cliff. No way were we getting our horses up there. So, we tied them to nearby trees, and then headed back on foot.

"We were trained for this," Iris started. "We've had worse."

I stared up at the cave where the pulse seemed to be coming from. It's true, we had faced worse in training, but man, this was really going to hurt my shoulder.

"You'll be alright, Blondie." Red patted my back. Taking a deep breath, Shepperd started up the cliff, Red following shortly after.

"Go, Sombé. I'll take the rear." Iris offered. So, I did. It was painful, but not as bad as I was expecting. I prayed I didn't pop stitches on the way up. As I got closer, I started hearing voices, but the strange part was, they seemed to be spoken in my head, not out loud.

"Tenumbra, stop splashing me!"

"Hella, don't just sit there like a bump on a log!"

"Seven, why are you eating... again?!"

"Do something about this Konoco!"

"Enough!" a voice shouted, but this one was out loud, and female, I could tell. The other voices went silent. I was at the mouth of the cave by now, and a hand shot out, grabbed my arm, and hauled me behind a large boulder. I tried my hardest not to cry out.

"That hurts, God darn it!" I hissed at Shepperd, but he placed a finger over his lips, frantically shushing me. Iris was by my side by then.

Red pointed over the large rock, and that's when I saw it. There was the sorceress, Catrina, but that wasn't the biggest concern... it was the four huge beasts sitting in front of her, each the color of one of the four elements. General Skye was right: sitting there, right in front of us, were the last of the dragons.

Chapter 3

"What do we do?!" I whispered quickly to Shepperd.

"Just wait." Was all the answer he gave me.

"On the count of three, we charge out there and give it all we've got." Red softly said.

"One..." I took a deep breath. "Two..." I gripped the hilt of my sword. "Three!" We charged out screaming.

"Slayers!" a male voice boomed in my head. I felt the pulsing that was almost unbearably strong now. The dragons leaped to their feet, hissing and snarling at us. The red/gold/orange one was looking right at me as I charged at it. Its neck looked swollen, a sure sign that this one was a fire dragon and if I didn't move quickly, I'd get flayed alive. It hissed in warning as I got closer, and the pounding got more intense, making my head want to explode. It puffed out its wings, and suddenly looked three times bigger. My eyes widened in alarm. I could hear my friends screaming, and at this point, I knew we were screwed. No amount of training



could prepare us for the real thing. The red dragon's jaw snapped open, and fire spewed out. Unlike the ice spike, I moved in time, although I could smell the stench of burnt hair. I was caught off guard for a split second, but it was enough time for the red dragon to knock me off my feet and trap me under its claws. Its neck swelled up again, and I thought, *this is it. This is how I'm going to die.*

I closed my eyes, preparing myself for the burn... but it never came. My eyes opened slowly, only to see the dragon gawking at a golden string that seemed attached to me.

"What..." The same male voice echoed in my head.

"Is that?" I finished the thought. The dragon's ice blue eyes snapped to mine, a startling contrast to his fiery scales. "You can understand me?"

My eyes widened once again. "That male voice, that's you?"

"How..." the voice asked, and the dragon shook its head, staring at me.

I turned my head, seeing all my friends in similar positions, each with a string connecting them to a different dragon.

"Well, well, well." Catrina looked over us all, a smile on her face. "Welcome to Typhoon cave, dragon riders."

"Wait, so you mean to tell me that everything we've been taught our whole lives... was a lie?" Iris gawked.

Catrina gave a short nod. "The king was, and still is, afraid. Dragons aren't evil, they never were. He just doesn't want someone to have enough power to overthrow him, and dragon riders have more than enough power to do it. *You* have more than enough power."

"Can we at least know these dragons' names?" I asked, hesitantly.

"I'm Tenumbra, element Water." The sea-blue and green dragon stepped forward, looking at Iris, who had been connected to her.

"Hella, element Air." The graceful black, white, and grey dragon seemed bored, picking at her talons, but did, briefly, make eye contact with Shepperd.

"The name is Seven, element Earth." The dark brown and yellow dragon seemed to mumble... it looked like he was busy eating a chicken, but he gave Red a toothy dragon grin, teeth full of feathers. I rolled my eyes. What a pair those two would be. The last, and the most intimidating of the dragons stepped forward.

"Konoco, element Fire." He said simply, making eye contact with me. I swallowed. How was it that the most powerful of all four dragons was connected to me?

"Now," the sorceress rubbed her hands together. "Who is ready to fly?"

Chapter 4

It had been almost three months since we got to Catrina's lair, and we were finally ready to launch our attack. Turned out, the dragon's dynamic was almost as weird as ours. They made us laugh, that's for sure. The pair that caused the most trouble, as to be expected, was Red and Seven, as they seemed to be the trouble makers of both the human and dragon groups. We had a few close calls with slayers while learning to ride our dragons, but managed to get ourselves out of any sticky situations.

I took in a long breath, watching the sunset. Tomorrow, we would attack the king, with no clue who would survive. I felt a presence behind me, and turned to see who it was. Red stepped out of the cave, his heterochromia eyes glinting in the light of the fading sun.

"What are you doing out here, Sombéré?" he asked, eyes connecting with mine. Mine were quite a contrast to his, pale sea-foam green to his emerald and scarlet.

He stood next to me, looking at the sunset like I had been. "It really is a nice sight."

I turned to look again, just as the sun sank below the horizon. "Yeah, it really is."

I saw him out of the corner of my eye, startlingly close to me. I turned to him.

"What are you—" but I was cut off when warm lips met mine. I was shocked, taking a moment to figure out just *what* was happening. I yanked back with a gasp, my hand flying to my mouth. I didn't give him any chance to explain, taking off to my room.

"Sombéré, wait!" I heard him yell. I slammed my door behind me, locking it, and sank to my knees, eyes almost bugging out of my head. It seemed as if Konoco could sense my distress, because not even a minute later, his voice was in my head. "Sombéré, are you alright?"

It took me a moment to answer, and when I did, it just made it seem more real. "Red kissed me."

It was time. Red had caught me this morning, trying to apologize and explain himself. I told him to forget it ever happened. Truth is, I was scared of the fluttery feeling brewing in my gut every time he was around. Now, we were flying to the king's fortress, looking for a weak spot to break in. Just when we thought we'd found it, a horn blew, signaling that a dragon had been sighted, or in this case... four.

"Crap!" I yelled. "They spotted us!"

"Dive!" Iris commanded. And that's how the fighting started. Fire was everywhere, the ground was shaking, people were being boiled alive by the scalding water Tenumbra spewed from her mouth.

"Get me to the window!" I yelled to Konoco.

"With pleasure." He growled back.

As I jumped inside, I turned back to him. "Tell the others I've gone to find the king!"

He gave me a curt nod, then took off at the speed of lightning. I ran through the corridors, desperate to find the throne room. When I made it there, I was surprised to find that there were no guards in sight. They must have been pre-occupied with the four dragons wreaking havoc outside. I swung open the entrance, seeing the king unguarded with no armor, sitting on his throne, expressionless, as if there wasn't a full-blown war going on outside.

Finally, he sighed, disappointment flicking across his face. "Ah, Sombéré, I had such high hopes for you."

"Well, maybe if you hadn't lied about *everything*, none of this would have happened!" I yelled that last part, charging at him. The king got up in a sheer second, our swords clashing together, the sound of metal ringing through the room. It didn't take long for him to tire, seeing as he was an older man, and I knocked the sword out of his hand, pressing the edge of my blade to his pale neck.

"Get on with it then, Dragon Rider." He hissed. I looked at him, and felt hesitation creep up my throat.

"No." I said, lowering the weapon. That was a mistake.



He lunged, and I lifted my sword just before he could get to me... and drove it right through his chest.

Chapter 5

"We did it!" Shepperd cheered as we toasted to our victory. I bit my lip, looking at a wildly grinning Red. *Now or never*, I thought.

"Go for it!" Konoco's voice echoed in my head, and he gave me a toothy dragon grin. I smiled back, more than nervous. I looked back at Red, and felt a sudden surge of confidence.

Right as he locked eyes with me, I muttered, "screw it" and marched right up to him, throwing my arms around his neck and claiming his lips as mine. He let out a noise of surprise before responding, melting into the kiss. Cheers and cat calls echoed around the room as we pulled away from each other, but rested our foreheads together.

"You know you're never getting away from me now, right?" he teased, grinning.

"Oh, I know." I laughed.

And oh, how true it was. With a little help from the kingdom and our four ever loyal dragons, we repaired everything that was damaged to its original state... maybe even better. And when the new eggs came, we couldn't help but rejoice, because we knew it wouldn't end with us. And a new age began.

The age of the dragon riders.



Ronoco

Sombré



Seven

Red



Hella

shepperd



Tenumbra

Iris

