*Dragons are real.  
  
The shock washes over you, slowly. You eventually come back to yourself and notice, as if for the first time, the person in front of you, sitting atop a majestic dragon. You know all about the dragon, naturally. Tale of Dragons has taught you a lot. Of course, until a few seconds ago, you had thought it was all fantasy…  
You blink in the sunlight. Not long ago at all, you had been inside, on the computer, hatching your newest rare. So many incredible dragons… could they ALL be as real as the one standing in front of you?  
“You can only have one,” says the figure on the dragon’s back. One dragon. That’s all? Online, you have tons. Then again, that’s a game. You’re shaken from your thoughts as the figure speaks again. “Now, come. Hurry! Usually, Mistland is only open to admins, but this is an emergency. We need everyone we can get who knows something about real dragons.”  
“Wait,” you say. “I’m going where?” Your mind flashes to all the things you have to do today – (sports practice, work, school, whatever) – but this has got to be important. You don’t know the stranger on the dragon, but come on! Real dragons! Not hesitating any longer, you scramble on board the dragon’s back. No sooner do you have a grip than the rider calls out to their steed and the dragon’s wings lift. It shoots up into the sky as fast as a bullet – and then the world around you disappears.  
“First, we need to get you an egg. I needed to catch mine myself, but since we’ve had such a growth recently, and because of certain... circumstances, you’ll just get yours from the hatchery that Silver and I built.”  
Silver? Meaning… SILVER Silver? The founder of the site? … Oh.  
“Wait. Who are YOU then?”  
The rider doesn’t answer. It’s so dark, they may not even be there anymore. Suddenly, however, the dragon’s wings stop beating and you’re sitting in broad daylight, in front of the strangest building you’ve ever seen.  
“Welcome to the hatchery on Mistland,” says the dragon rider with a slight smile. “Go right on in.” The rider then promptly flies away into the sky until they're hardly a speck, and then gone.*

Riv blinked. Then blinked again. "Is this real?" she asked. No answer came.

Finally, after long moments of staring into the sky and wondering if she should pinch herself, she turned around to face the utterly strange, and at the same time beautifully architectured building. It had countless large hole-like openings inside it, with rainbow colors shimmering all over the walls. There were domes and arches, flat walls and towers - it looked like a cave built into a castle-citadel-modern home-like building. It truly was the strangest thing Riv had ever seen.

With a final sigh and a quick look around to see if she had missed anything she started to walk towards the obvious entrance to the hatchery. It was the biggest arched doorway she had ever seen. Well, I guess it has to be that big, she mused, since the wingless dragons, once they've grown up, wouldn't be able to exit the hatchery, if they are very big... they could step over the walls, though… but I imagine there would be guards and stuff... ugh, you are just rambling now. Stop, okay? Better think about which dragon you are going to pick...

Just one, she was allowed just one. Which one should she take? As far as she could see, there was no one else around, so she would be the first non-admin person to get a dragon, apparently. Would a Shenlong be a good idea? Or, oh! Maybe a Frosted Holly. Riv loved the color green, after all. But she was also a person of warmth, and she hated cold, so a Holly wouldn't be such a good idea, seeing as it liked more ice and snow than a warm beach...

In between her thoughts, she barely noticed stepping over the threshold of the majestic, yet still homely building. But the picture that opened before her was so breathtaking, her thoughts were cut off and she was left standing, gaping at the beauty before her eyes. There were very many doorways going deeper into the facility, more than she could count. Each one was decorated differently, but yet they all seemed to be in some sort of an order which made the whole round room look like a picture of all the four seasons with each having different aspects of it pictured. Straight across her was the second-biggest doorway, and it was covered with drawings and painting of eggs in different stages of hatching. Obviously that had to be the egg hatchery, and if the mysterious rider was right, that's where she had to go first.

Before she had really had time to process all the information thrown at her, Avalon was standing in front of the dragon hatchery, alone. She noticed her hands were shaking. How on Earth had she just discovered (well, discovered was the wrong term to use, seeing as she was far from the first one to come here) a new dimension and not known about it before hand!? She studied this sort of thing all the time! And it had been virtually right in front of her face for years! Still, better late than never, she supposed. Before she started walking, she took time to take in the scenery of the world around her. It looked similar to Earth... somewhat. There were just a few small differences. For one, the flowers were the strangest color she'd ever seen. They were bright orange laced with violet that was so close to the end of the visible spectrum that it seemed to glow. The grass was quite bluish and the blades were extremely thick, probably as wide as her eye. The sky was sort of normal-looking, except that there were stars out in the middle of the day... Suddenly, she remembered the dragons again. Were there really some inside? This was so great! She half-walked, half-ran toward the hatchery. She had no idea which she'd choose, but she just wanted to SEE them all.

Lucky scrambled down off the dragon eagerly, stepping towards the hatchery. She'd known about this place for quite some time now but never had she imagined she would be able to visit. As much as she knew the disastrous reason why she was allowed here it didn't stop her from being excited. She stepped into the hatchery, looking around in awe. It was even better than she'd heard! She grinned, seeing the two others inside. Quickly she composed herself to look calm. She was a Mod. She had to be in control as best she could. True, she was only a minor one as far as Mods went, but for this mission she was strangely well suited. After all, who better to help with something than one of the Help Mods? "Welcome to Mistland!" She announce to the other two, spreading her arms in a welcoming gesture. "Majestic, isn't it?" She couldn't keep the awe and wonder out of her voice. Even to her, this place was amazing.

Riv turned around at the sound of steps behind her. She noticed a girl in a ridiculously pretty blue top and jeans, who strangely reminded her of Elsa from that awesome new Disney movie she had just watched the other night at the cinema, almost running inside, apparently not noticing Riv at all. She was just fine with that, she didn't think she could say anything coherent anyway. The girl looked familiar though, as if she'd known her on Earth. But of course! Riv almost facepalmed herself - it could only be Avalon! She had seen that pretty avatar all over the place. But for now she was too busy thinking about dragons and them being real to talk to the girl who was examining the wondrous pictures on the walls. Turning back towards the egg room, she was about to start moving towards it to finally get that dragon she had dreamed of having for all her life, when someone spoke behind her.

It wasn't Avalon, though. It was another girl, looking strangely familiar, but she couldn't quite put her in her place yet. The strangest thing about her were the cat-ears that she was wearing on her head. And then it clicked. Lucky!

Of course it was the sweet Help Mod who kept closing dealt with help topics. And that green pendant Riv was so jealous of was definitely around her neck.

"Hi, Lucky!!! Imagine seeing you here. Any idea what's going on?" Riv asked the other girl, not moving from her spot now that the thought of having to race for a dragon egg (as only one was available for each) had crossed her mind.

Avalon paused and turned around. Oh yeah, the rider had said that EVERYONE was being allowed in. Well, it would certainly be interesting to meet these people. She started walking back towards the two who were standing over there. "Hello," she replied to the person who had greeted her. After that, her mind started racing again, and she only remembered that she had said something when she noticed the other two looking at her expectantly. "Well, I'm Avalon," she stammered, somewhat embarrassed. These were strangers, though of course she knew them online. "Who are you guys?"

Before Lucky could even react, Avalon was suddenly there.

"I'm Avalon. Who are you guys?" she stammered slightly, obviously looking nervous. Riv could understand why. Even though she knew both from online, she'd never met them in real life before and it was kind of scary, though she usually tried to swallow the awkwardness down and just be a bubbly happy person to make others feel more at ease as well.

"I'm Riv, I'm pretty sure we've talked a bit on the forum. To be honest, it's a bit weird, seeing you both here in front of me," she laughed a bit nervously as she looked at the others, trying to look as comfortable as the situation allowed. "By the way, I really love your top," she smiled to Avalon, hoping she wasn't sounding like a complete mad-man, talking about tops when there were literally dragons everywhere around them, just not visible yet.

"Well, thanks," Avalon laughed. "So how did you get here? The same way as me, I imagine. The person on the dragon and all that? Which dragon do you think you'll pick? I think I might have to think about it for a bit. Hm, I haven't memorized what they all look like, have you? What if I say I want one and then change my mind when I remember another one? What would you do? By the way, do you guys know anything about this place?" She noticed she was rambling a little bit. "Sorry, I'm just a little... I guess overwhelmed would be the word."

Lucky was quiet, listening to the other two girls talk. Hearing their names, she instantly remembered who they were. It didn't surprise her that they would be the first ones here. They were both quite active on the forums and Silver would want people who were sure to help. "Don't worry. It can be overwhelming to anyone, even someone who knew about it before hand." She reassured Avalon with a small chuckle. "I'm Lucky, but I think that was probably pretty obvious." She poked at her cat ear headband with a smile. She never went anywhere without her ears or collar. "I suspect anyone who ends up here is going to come the same way. He's going to be busy for the next while, gathering up anyone he can. Mistland has been having trouble lately." She paused, chewing on her bottom lip. "Come on. Let's take a look at the eggs. That's the most important thing right now. We need to make sure the dragons form their bonds above all. The more dragons that bond to someone, the more we'll save."

"Sure thing!" grinned Avalon. "What do you say we go together? Have you been here before? Do you know where we're supposed to go? This place is pretty big, after all. Although, if I had to get lost anywhere, it would be here!" she laughed. "It's TOTALLY AMAZING!" She almost starting jumping up and down before she calmed herself. "Anyway. Shall we?"

Riv listened to Avalon ramble and had to bite her lip not to smile affectionately. It's just like she felt on the inside. She would just have rambled on and on and on about all the dragons and how she didn't know all of them yet and how it was just all as overwhelming as Avalon had said, but she tried to make herself look composed and more adult-like than she could probably ever be. So she just nodded attentively and laughed when Lucky poked her ears - they looked really cute indeed.

"Let's go then! The more eggs we save, the better, obviously!" Riv gladly jumped at the mention of actually going to see the real eggs. She wondered how big and heavy they would be and if they would be warm or have a special smell to them or if they would actually move as the dragon inside wanted to get out and yet again she was rambling. Shut up. Now. Listen to what the others are saying, she sternly told herself as they set off towards the Egg Discovery Room (that she had so "brilliantly" named in her own mind).

The room seemed to become bigger with every step they took towards the doorway. It's as if they were in one of those horror movies where the exit grows farther and farther away the more they kept trying to get closer to it. Just that this wasn't a horror movie, not with these lovely pictures everywhere... or was it?

Lucky headed into the egg chamber, looking around. She smiled, to see it in all its true glory. "Silver told us about this place, but I never thought I'd get to see it for real." She said, drinking in the sight. "We can only take one egg each though. Raising a dragon here is a lot different than on Tale of Dragons. It takes a lot more effort. You can't just shoved them full of carrots and stick them in a lair for later," she told with a chuckle. She looked over the eggs that were scattered around. Three of them seemed to be more forwards than the rest of the room. As she studied the eggs, a low rumbling filled the room for a brief moment. To her surprise, the floor was shifting! Lucky stared in shock, then realized what was happening. "The eggs are rotating!" She whispered, staring as three new eggs came to the front while the others were shifted back into the piles. "I thought that was just a website thing, with the refreshing the page. But they're actually rotating! Oh wow....." Moving forwards carefully, she began looking over the eggs. She already knew which one she wanted. It was just a matter of finding it. After all, there was only one dragon she hoarded for herself. "Where are you baby? I know you're here somewhere." She mumbled to herself as she searched among the eggs.

Avalon laughed a little absently at Lucky's comment. Then she looked around at the eggs. There were so many to choose from! Wow, it looked like the hatchery was updated with all the latest releases, even the Krystoses. Should she pick one of those? They were certainly pretty, but their personality was too different from hers, she recalled from the adults' description. Suddenly, one caught her eye. "What the...?" she muttered to herself. That egg. She didn't recognize that egg! She raced over to it. It was cream, red, and gold, and amazingly beautiful. But what was it? Other than this one, there were no eggs that weren't on the site. Or WAS this one on the site? She automatically reached for her smartphone to check and see if it was flooding in the lair, but suddenly realized with dismay that she had left it charging at home. She growled, but then laughed at herself a little. Here she was, in the ACTUAL dragon world, with ACTUAL dragons, and she was worried about missing the release on the site! Well, she decided, if she couldn't have this dragon on the Web, she would have it in real life instead. She picked it up confidently. "This one's for me," she grinned.

So. Many. Eggs. It was overwhelming Riv for a moment. They seemed to rotate, like on the site as well, but instead of having to choose from the three, she could also go through the piles they came from. During the walk she'd already decided on a dragon. She didn't have it on the site itself yet, because it was one of the rarest dragons there, but she knew it would be a perfect companion for her.

After what seemed a very long while of searching, squinting, and sighing, she finally gave up. Her lovely egg didn't seem to be anywhere near. There were plenty of black eggs around, but none of them were the breed she wanted. None of them burned her when she neared the egg with her hand.

Deciding to take a break, Riv walked to the nearest wall that wasn't crowded with eggs, and plopped down onto her behind. She looked at Avalon, who was mumbling something to her egg as she cuddled it like a baby, and felt a pang of jealousy. Okay, so Lucky was still looking as well, but it still felt a bit awkward. The egg Avalon was holding, however, wasn't really to her taste, so she got some of her dignity back and simply looked away as she pondered upon her own problem.

And then suddenly, there was the answer! If the hatchery was built up just like online, it was obvious her egg wouldn't be here. This was for lairborn dragons, but her baby Phoenix would only be available through breeding. She needed to find the abandoned eggs!

Riv was on her feet quicker than ever. She scanned the room with her eyes, looking for any signs of an abandoned pile or such. Finally, there in the dark corner furthest away from the doorway she finally glimpsed a small sign. Quickly making her way towards it she passed Avalon and Lucky, who looked at her in wonderment for a moment, but then continued with their previous actions, and finally reached the eggs she'd been waiting for. There were not many. And there was just one black egg. She reached out her hand hopefully, albeit carefully, not knowing what kind of a burning sensation it would be - and pulled it back like she'd been shocked. She had been, to be honest. It had felt like ice-cold flames had licked up her hand and burned in her veins. And it had felt good.

She reached out hesitantly again, and, ignoring the slightly painful, but somehow sweet sensation she picked up the pitch-black egg. It was roughly the size of a new-born baby, so big enough to fit exactly into the crook of her elbow. Riv cradled the egg and felt how the burning slowly retreated, though it didn't completely go away. Just enough was left so that she could feel comfortable again, but always be reminded of what she was carrying.

Avalon saw Riv pick up a dark egg in a very dark corner. There were so many black eggs, and she couldn't see it all too well in the dimness of the corner. By her estimation, it was either a Sulfur (not really Riv's style, just as a guess), an Apis Eastern, a Blazing Wyvern, a Shenlong (no electric sparks, though), a Phoenix, a Nemesis (probably too dark to be one), or a Glory Storm (she couldn't remember how much of the lightning bolt covered the egg - it might just not be visible from this angle). Curious, she passed Lucky, who was still digging through the pile, and walked over to Riv, hugging her egg tightly. It was smoother than she had expected, and big. It was a little difficult to carry, but she managed to keep it in a safe position. "Whatcha got there?" she asked.

Lucky glanced over as the other girls found their eggs. Riv seemed to pull hers from a dark corner that gave off a lonely feeling. The abandoned lair, she decided, studying it for a moment. Quickly she turned back to her own search. The egg she wanted was unique so it wasn't much longer before she found it. "Aha! There you are!" She picked up a blue egg from where it lay against the wall. A painting on the wall depicted a beautiful blooming peach tree and on the egg was perfectly little pink flower. Lucky cradled the egg with a loving smile. Keystones were one of her favorite breeds, with their deep blue body and rainbow feathers. Holding the egg, she headed back over to the others. "What's that you've got Avalon? I don't think I've seen that one before." She said, looking curiously at the strangely marked egg.

"Neither have I," said Avalon. "I guess there was a release today. I'm curious." Not only that, but she could already tell she liked this dragon. It radiated calm and grace, and the shimmer on the egg's surface was quite beautiful. She nodded at Lucky's choice of a Keystone. They were her sister's favorite dragon, and she agreed they were cool. The Keystone would also be practical, since it could be ridden once it was an adult. "Sooo, now that we have our eggs, what do we do? Do we need to feed them or something? Can you even feed eggs?" she asked.

Lucky chuckled lightly and shook her head. "Do you see a mouth on them?" She asked playfully. "Nope, here in Mistland, things have to be done the old fashioned way. No carrots, no Yarolds, nothing. Just loving tender care. The dragons will hatch in their own time, so long as we care for them." Absently she was stroking the blue shell of her eggs, being careful not to disturb the flower on it. "So for now, we can just explore a bit I guess. I wouldn't stray too far from the den though. We can't risk anything happening to the eggs and beyond the den is a strange world like nothing else. Once the eggs hatch though, we'll be able to roam further and really get going on our mission. Dragon hatchlings are very resilient."

"Cool," replied Avalon. She stared out the window into the wilderness. It didn't look dangerous, but she had seen the forest coming in. Now THAT was pretty scary. She wouldn't want anything to happen to her egg, so she figured she'd stay inside for a bit. "I'm going to look around," she told her new friends. She looked down at her egg wonderingly. "I wonder how long it'll take them to hatch," she said.

Riv was so mesmerized by her beautiful dark egg and so lost in thoughts that she barely noticed the others talking. She did hear bits and pieces of what Lucky was saying about the egg hatching, and she wondered about her own. It will surely take much longer to hatch her baby than the other more common ones. Otherwise the beautiful dragons wouldn't be so rare, after all.

She had to talk to the others, though, or she wouldn't know what to do. So she slightly shook herself, composed her thoughts, and stepped closer to the two talking girls, just to hear Avalon saying: "I wonder how long it'll take them to hatch." She didn't know the answer, so she didn't say anything about that, but she did move her egg she was cradling just that little bit to get a better hold, unconsciously letting her fingers draw little meaningless patterns over the warm smooth surface.

"Hey, I see you got a Keystone, those are lovely ones, too bright for me, though. And I have honestly never seen that egg you're holding, Avalon. The cream is a lovely color, but again, a bit too bright for me." Riv blurted out quickly, slightly embarrassed that her mouth didn't want to shut up and think of a more adult-y, more sophisticated sentence. Nope, that never happened to her, did it? So she blushed a bit, hugged her egg tighter to her chest, and peeked at the other girls to see what their reactions would be.

"Probably depends on the species. I doubt mine will take long. Keystones are pretty common." Lucky said, then grinned at Riv. "The fact that they're bright is why I love them. Blue is my favorite color. Take that, throw some rainbows on it, and call them perfect. And they've got those neat tribal markings too. So what egg did you grab Riv?" She asked, looking over the black egg. Without really getting her hands on it (and it just felt wrong to touch and egg claimed by someone else) she wasn't entirely sure which breed Riv had selected.

Riv looked affectionately at her burningly black egg nestled comfortably in her arms at Lucky's question. Then she turned her eyes back on the cat-eared girl and said softly: "Meet my baby - the rare Skull Phoenix. It's the one and only dragon that really fits me... black and yet with beautiful blue flames... though I wish they could be green, since green is my favorite color." She stroked the egg, thinking wishful thoughts about green flames.

Avalon looked happily down at her egg. "I still don't know what mine is, funnily enough," she answered Riv. "It's not the color I thought I would get, but I like it anyway. I generally would pick something blue or green, but gold is cool, too. Anyways, I'm going to go see what's through that door." She gestured to a wooden door in the right wall. "You guys can come, if you want." With a smile, she started walking toward the door.

Lucky gave a low whistle. "You managed to find a Skull Phoenix egg? Wow. Lucky you. I would envy you, if I didn't love my Keystones so much." She said with a small chuckle. She glanced at Avalon and considered it for a moment then followed. "Might as well peek around a bit. Besides, I think we should stick together." She gestured Riv to follow. "Come on Riv!" She encouraged the other girl.

Riv followed the two girls out the door. She was still slightly dazed about holding a dragon egg, a real dragon egg in her hands. What overwhelmed her even more was the fact that it was going to hatch some day soon, and she was going to have a dragon to take care of. Quick thoughts of Eragon, one of her favorite book series about dragons, flicked through her mind, reminding her of the ways Eragon had taken care of Saphira when she was still small. But this would obviously be different, wouldn't it? Riv didn't know what to expect, and it was making her nervous. They walked out the door together, back into the uberlarge domed lobby. The pictures had turned darker, like they were depicting night-time scenes now instead of the colorful sunny ones. She figured it would be evening, running to night outside. Just as that thought had crossed her mind, she suddenly felt quite tired, and somehow she knew it wasn't only her. Her egg was emitting a strange feeling through the burning sensation, like it was needing to be put down somewhere safe and warm for the night. Riv turned to Avalon and Lucky: "I'm pretty sure it's night now, and I'm not sure if you feel anything from your eggs, but I'm pretty sure mine wants to spend the night somewhere else than my lap." She made a funny face - it was weird talking about an egg like that, but another fact from Eragon (that she totally was using as a cover for all her dragon ideas for the moment) penetrated her mind - dragons are ready to be born inside the egg for a long time, they just wait for the perfect moment, in this case their owner then. "I also feel pretty tired -" she punctuated that with a big yawn "- so maybe we should find some place to rest in here? I'm not much for going outside, I feel safer in here, and I know he does as well," she pointed to her egg.

Avalon looked around curiously at the pictures on the walls. "That's interesting," she said. "Well, I think you're probably right. I'm fairly tired too." She could tell it wasn't just her, though. Strange as it was, she could tell her egg was sleepy. Perhaps it was just because the movements inside had stopped, but she felt it might be something more connected to her mind. It weirded her out a little. "Still," she continued, "where are we going to sleep? It's safe in here, but the floor is really hard. There's no way I could sleep properly there. Also, if I recall correctly, eggs are used to being in nests. But where would we find nests?"

Riv had been scanning the large room with her eyes whilst Avalon spoke, and just as she had finished her question, Riv found it. The picture of hunderds of different nests, some with eggs, some empty, on the wall. Right underneath and inside it was a doorway, much the same size as the door to the egg lair. She pointed her finger towards it. "You think that might be it? I sure do hope so, and can't really see anything else that would resemble nests more than that. Shall we go check it out?"

"Oh, wow." Avalon laughed out of surprise at not having noticed that before. "Let's go check it out, then!" She walked into the room. The whole floor was covered in hay, grass, and various other materials. The colors were strangely mottled, like some of the hay had been burned in certain places. Strangely, it was entirely empty of eggs. Still, it looked comfortable. "Fantastic," said Avalon. She was so exhausted, she simply sat down in a random spot, set her egg down next to her, and went to sleep.

Riv entered the room behind Avalon and gasped quietly when she saw and smelled the lovely hay and grass all around. The burnt patches didn't look too inviting for her, though, so she picked a nice sweetly smelling grassy spot that was surprisingly soft underneath her. She didn't quite want to put her precious Phoenix down just yet, but then suddenly she got a little mental nudge from the egg (which surprised her so much she almost jumped up again), and finally settled it down right next to her. There was a slightly higher mound of extra soft grass right nearby, so Riv laid down and set her head upon it. She wanted to say good-night to Avalon and Lucky, but somehow was asleep before she could finish the thought.

Lucky glanced towards the door to outside, but before she could say she wanted to carry on, she felt the same need for sleep the others did. But she wasn't really tired, so why did she feel like she needed sleep so badly? It took her a moment to realize the feeling was coming from her egg of all things. She looked at the egg in wonder, amazed that it was able to do that. In a bit of a daze, she followed the other girls into the room. Lucky looked around the room, blinking in surprise at all the nesting materials. She wasn't sure if the nesting worked the same as on Tales, but she wanted to try anyways. She gathered a pile of nest supplies, shaping it just right for her egg which was sitting nearby while she worked. Once the nest was set up properly, she hunted around and managed to find a flint and steel in the corner. Using it, she set a small spark into the material. As she watched, the nest quickly turned into a smoldering pile. Lucky backed off from the heat and sat down, watching the nest as it burned. Before long it was just the charred remains of a nest. Lucky tested it with her hand and was satisfied that it was only warm, not hot. Carefully she settled her precious egg in the warm nest. Only once that was done did she settle herself down beside the egg on a pile of hay.

Invi stumbled towards the building, watching the sky. "Wha..........what is this place? Is this a dream? This can’t be real. Did I whack my head on something? What’s going on?!" Something felt off.  
"Well," she said, "if this is earth, then this must be a parallel universe, meaning that I must have gone through some sort of inter-dimensional rift. This did not happen as they have a powerful electronic charge. We would have been fried. Unlesssss..... dragons have some sort of earth... but this looks like a different planet as the wild life is completely different. Meaning that we went through a wormhole, meaning that I could be millions of light years away, meaning I won’t get back any time soon , MEANING.......I’m gonna need a fez...."  
Invi had arrived at the door and was now inspecting it. Very large, very old. Was someone gonna let her in or should she just proceed to find the dragons? Invi knocked on the door four times. No answer. She did it again.  
Silence.   
And so she did the only logical thing: ...she burst in.

Riv snorted in her sleep and rolled on the other side, almost knocking her egg over, but some invisible power stopped her in the last second and gently pushed her back until she wiggled into a more comfortable position, curled protectively around the egg. Her dreams were full of wings - large, small, see-through and solid ones, colorful and monotone, black and white, blue and green, red and yellow. There were feathery wings and there were fiery wings. There were ice-like wings and molten stone-like wings. Every kind her mind could come up with. But the ones that came up the most were bright blue flames with green tips that ended with a blackness so deep she lost herself inside it.

Suddenly something changed. It was as if the flames were hushed out by the wind, and she was awake. She didn't know what woke her up, but she was sure she could hear a distant knocking. But up alone in a place she was dropped into just that day - no way was she going to get up and go see what was up. So she closed her eyes, hoping for the best and praying it wasn't some hungry dragon looking for some human meat (she shuddered), and concentrated hard on the vestiges of the dream she'd had before waking up. She was asleep in less than a minute. A record for her.

Invi continued to wander around. The biggest door did catch her interest but she decided that, if in fact dragons did exist, the biggest doors would most likely be the ones to harbor them. And so she walked through another of the many, labeled, but she was too lazy to read it. Walking through the door she saw several forms, laying on the floor, most likely sleeping. They looked human.....but they may not be friendly. She backed up, and unfortunately stepped on an old pygmy eggshell. It made a horribly loud crunch.

Riv was sleeping so deep she didn't even register the loud crack that reverberated in the room and off the high ceiling. It was usual for her to sleep through a whole parade going by underneath the window. If it hadn't been that same force that had woken her up before, she would've slept on, not knowing anything that was going on around her. But she woke now, again not sure why. It was almost pitch black, and only dark shadows showed where Lucky and Avalon were with their eggs. She wasn't sure if they'd waken or not, she couldn't hear anything but the last passing whispers of a cracking noise.

She was quite sure it was her egg that had woken her up. Again. If it started doing that every night, she had to figure out something else. She needed her sleep.

She was scanning the dark room for the source of the disturbance whilst her thoughts were silently battering the egg for waking her up in pitch black. Her eyes had never been too good, and she automatically reached for her glasses, when suddenly she realized she'd never had them on, beginning from the time she'd been transported to this strange Dragon Earth (as she called it in her mind - it had completely bypassed her brain that this place was supposed to be called Mistland). Well, she thought, this is definitely an improvement. I've been wanting to get rid of those glasses for sooooooo long now.

And with that thought, her searching eyes landed on a dark figure, half standing, half crouching near where she remembered the exit to the lobby being. It was definitely neither Avalon nor Lucky, since she could hear both of them near her. Who was that?

Invi froze. From what she could see, one of them was awake, and was looking at her. "Uh... hi there… you..." She wasn't quite sure what to say, as this person may be hostile.

"Uh... um, lovely night we’re having... isn't it...?"

There were two options. The dark figure was either a really good actor and was playing successfully the part of a scared, slightly stuttery person who had just been dropped into a different world, or they really were in that situation. Since Riv had experienced the being scared part herself and not knowing what to do, she was inclined towards the second option. She did, however, keep her guard up and her face carefully blank (not that it made much difference in the darkness).

"Uh.. lovely night? Yes, yes, one might say so," she tried to sound sophisticated, slightly witty and British, and failing that horribly. She coughed. "Khm, well, aside from the night... who might you be and what brings you here?"

Invi listened to the voice of the figure. It kinda sounded like she was trying to be British... it wasn't working. She decided to reply, "Well, if you can believe it, I was brought here on the back of magical sparkle dragon who told me to catch one for myself. He then proceeded to dump me in a field." Invi blinked; she felt like she had said that a bit too sarcastically. "Uh, I’m Invi."

Riv chuckled lightly at the mention of "magical sparkle dragon." It was just what she'd thought the first instant she'd caught a glimpse of the dragon. That was definitely one of the others who were now starting to come. Riv was just glad she got here almost first and got her beloved egg before everyone else.

"Well, hello, Invi, I'm Riv and I also arrived on the "magical sparkle dragon"," she air-quoted, then quickly dropped her hands because the other person wouldn't be able to see that correctly. "Why don't you come closer so that I can actually see you? Oh, and those two could sleep through a storm, it seems," she pointed at her other two companions who were still out cold, it seemed. Or maybe they were listening in secretly, letting her do all the work? Who knew...

Lucky rolled over in her sleep, opening one eye to look up at the two talking. "Some of us are trying to sleep through the storm, but you're making it hard." She commented, yawning. She sighed and sat up, rubbing her eyes. "Well, probably won't get much sleep until this is sorted out. I'm Lucky. Welcome to Mistland, where dragons are real. This is what Tale of Dragons was based on. Bet you never thought it was real." She added with a small chuckle.

Avalon jolted to a start, her ears ringing. She had been dreaming strangely - she remembered beautiful, crystalline music and slowly drifting snowflakes, but generally her visions were much less abstract. But why had she awoken? She noticed Lucky and Riv already sitting up. What was...? She hugged her egg protectively as she spotted another figure in the corner. It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the light, during which she sat frozen in fear. Then she discerned the person in the corner - dressed all in black, with long blonde hair and a somewhat unsure hostile expression on her face. It could only be one person. "Invi!" she jumped up. "You're back!" Then she remembered that she had technically never "met" her before and quieted down for a second. "Um, hey!" she continued. "It's Avalon... yeah. Well, have you met Riv? You probably haven't yet. She's new. Riv, this is Invi. I used to do roleplays with her and chat and stuff." She noticed the extreme lack of eggs in Invi's general vicinity. "Do you have your egg yet?" she continued. "We all have ours already. Oh, that's Lucky, by the way, if she hasn't told you..." Avalon gestured toward Lucky on her left. "You remember her, right? I think?"

Shace had also entered the hatchery, admittedly much less boom-bastically than the last person who had entered.

Well, it can't have been closed if the doors were wide open. She didn't see any members of staff, though...

She called into the seemingly empty building, "Hello? Is there anybody here?"

"I swear he doesn't want us to get any sleep," Lucky muttered, hearing a new voice. "I'd better go get her. Nice to see you here, Invi." She tossed a mock salute in Invi's direction before rising to her feet. She gathered up her egg, not about to leave it anywhere without her, then headed out of the room. Spotting Shace easily in the large main room, she smiled at her. "Hey. Welcome to Mistland. The rest of us are in here." She gestured back towards the room she had come out of. "There's only a few of us for now. You want to look for an egg first or get some sleep and do it in the morning?" she asked, cradling her egg lovingly. It hadn't even hatched yet, but she already felt a deep bond to the dragon within. She - Lucky hoped it was a she - was going to be her best friend and closest companion ever.

Invi smiled at Avalon. "You know what I want?" Invi said. "I want one of those!" she pointed to Avalon's egg. They were bigger than expected, and shinier too. She continued, "Not that one in particular, I just want one... by the way, are there any new breeds? I haven't been here, there in a while..." she looked at Avalon's egg. So pretty. She really wanted one she could ride... something fast and agile.

Finally Lucky and Avalon had woken up. Avalon, as usual to herself, started babbling at Invi, who Riv waved at a little awkwardly when they were officially introduced to each other. Lucky then proceeded to leave the room when yet another voice penetrated the hall. Riv didn't know what to do. She sat there, hand protectively laid across her burning egg, not knowing whether to try and go back to sleep (though with all these new arrivals it didn't seem too possible), continue to sit on the sweet-smelling grass with her egg nestled in the fresh hay nest beside her, looking awkward, or get up and explore the rest of the huge compound. The last part, though, didn't sound quite that appealing either, not in this darkness, where a growing dragon might think you a slight midnight snack. Riv snickered to herself at that last thought, and then looked around quickly to see if no one had noticed her laughing to herself like a madman. She figured she'd see what Invi and Avalon were going to do, and follow suit. She was great in leading when she was in a team and she knew what she wanted to do, but otherwise she was going through life quite like a lost puppy.

Shace twirled her long brown hair in thought, trying to decide, "I think I want to find an egg before bed, I'm not sure I could sleep right now anyway."

Lucky nodded easily. "We were all pretty excited to be here too. Come on, I'll show you the egg room." She gestured for Shace to follow her. She led the other girl over to the egg room and gestured around. "Pick an egg. There's lots here to choose from. I think there's only one of each, though. I haven't seen more than that," she told Shace thoughtfully.

"Excited? Try confused," Shace chuckled, looking at the seemingly massive amount of eggs. "I hope my favorite is still available then." She looked around, inspecting the silvery colored eggs, gently touching each one.

Avalon curled her arms protectively around her egg. "Well, they're in the main room. I didn't see any more of these ones, though," she answered. "There have been absolutely TONS of releases! Especially donations. A few I think you would like - there are certainly plenty of scary ones." She laughed a little. Whatever Invi's dragon was, she got the sneaking suspicion she would try and avoid it most of the time. Invi was her friend, but they also had very different tastes. "Do you want to go have a look?" She gestured towards the door. "I'll come too. We should probably see who's outside first, though." She had seen Lucky leave, but didn't know where the two were now.

Invi exited the dark room and one again entered the main hall. She quickly located the egg room and walked in, nodding to the new girl who appeared to be feeling a silver egg, before moving on to the next one. Invi scanned the room for eggs. There were quite a few she had never seen before. An egg caught her eye. Shiny, solid black. Touching it though, it felt bitterly cold, as if it wanted her, and cared for nothing. She moved on. Looking over the variety she saw ones she recognized: red velvet, pollen, tuxedo... hello, what’s this? She spotted a black and red glimmer in a pile of smaller eggs that she guessed were pygmies. The closer she got to it, the more happy she felt. As soon as she touched it she knew it was right. Small tingles went up her arm and she felt like she had just gotten off a roller coaster. Oh yes, this one was sooooo hers...

Shace nodded back to the excited girl and went back to her task. Finally she laid her hand on an egg that did exactly what she was looking for... It melted a little at her touch. She admittedly had bit of a celebratory outburst upon the discovery: "YES!"

After a moment she calmed down, coming to a realization; how was she supposed to pick it up and carry it places without it melting into nothing...?

Riv had followed the others out, sneaking rather silently behind them. She had so many thoughts in her head so she stayed quiet and watched as Invi and the other new girl found their eggs. It looked like the new girl had gotten a Quicksilver Lindwyrm. That posed an interesting problem - how was she going to carry it around without it melting? Riv pondered for a moment on that question, but, finding no answer, she turned her attention to Invi, who, to her slight surprise, had picked a Painted Thornback egg, one of the breeds Riv herself had considered at first when she had gotten here. She'd turned it down, though, for the bright-colored parts on the dragon - she was all about stealth and invisibility, especially during the night. That's why she'd picked a Skull Phoenix - the blue flames wouldn't be as bright as the golden ones, plus the rest of the body was black, and she could ride it as well. The flames could be concealed, but they'd still give off warmth, she figured. That would be handy in winter.

Suddenly she got a weird little mental nudge from her egg. It surprised her, but she was getting more and more used to the connection that was growing between her and the burning egg in her hands, so she instinctively knew what the egg wanted from her. Apparently it wanted her to move closer to the newcomers, so that it could ... feel their eggs? Riv was confused, but did as asked. She slowly moved closer to Invi, who was smiling victoriously at her egg, trying to appear nonchalant.

"Sooo, I see you got a Thornback? Nice choice, it was one of the breeds that I considered when I first got here. You know, it would make a really nice..." Riv continued to babble on about something that she wasn't really thinking about. She was more involved in concentrating on what her egg was doing - she was immensely intrigued by the "feeling their eggs" part and she wanted to know what it meant.

Lucky smiled, watching the two new ones pick their eggs. She stroked her egg, getting a feeling of contentment from it. There were friends and a safe place for the night. It was, she agreed with her egg, a good time. Seeing what Shace had chosen, though, she realized they had a problem to contend with. "Hmm.....Hey Shace, try wrapping it in your jacket. Maybe it only reacts to being touched by skin?" She suggested. "Or try putting it next to the Herald egg. It's a frozen ice crystal thing. Maybe if it’s heat that melts the egg, the Herald egg will held stop it." She wasn't really sure either suggestion would work, but they were all she could think of at the moment.

Invi was listening to Riv when she suddenly found herself having a headache. As it dissipated, she found herself having the urge to get to a warmer place. Eventually she realized it was not her, but her egg. The feeling was the weirdest she had ever come across. When Riv stopped talking she walked over to Lucky and Avalon and away from an egg that seemed to be giving out cold.

Riv watched Invi walk away, and felt a rush of sadness flow through her. It took her just a moment to realize it was coming from her egg. She turned her back on the others and walked further away, slowly petting her egg and whispering that everything was okay to it. She wasn't sure why her egg had suddenly turned so sad. Everything had gone so well, her egg had tried to reach out to the other, and then Invi was walking away and her egg got very sad. What was going on?

Riv sat down at a corner, away from the others, trying to use her connection to her eggie to find out what was wrong. At first there was nothing. Only more sadness and a lonely feeling emanated from it. Then slowly, the pictures started, albeit hazy and broken. She got glimpses of a dark empty corner, and a feeling of very long time passing by hit her. She saw other, colorful eggs, and invisible hands taking them up, giving them homes. Just that dark corner was never penetrated, not one pair of hands ever touched the dark-as-night egg that kept burning with icy loneliness. She saw blurry attempts to communicate with other eggs, but everyone shied away, scared of the ice flames and the horrible reputation evil beings had given the Skull Phoenixes.

And then she was back in the egg room, sitting in the corner with tears falling silently from the corners of her eyes. She hugged her egg really tightly to her chest, not at all bothered by the cold heat that was getting stronger with every second. It's okay, my little darling, it's gonna be okay, she mentally told her egg, I found you and you will never have to be alone again. I'm so, so sorry for what you have lived through, and I promise you, it's going to change. She wasn't sure if the egg had understood her - after all, these were dragons and she wasn't sure if they understood human language, but it seemed the egg had at least understood the meaning of what she was saying as the flames flickered down a notch and a slightly scared but loving hum penetrated her mind. She smiled through her tears and continued to project meaningless happy pictures to her egg to calm it down.

Avalon jogged to catch up with the others, careful not to jostle her egg. She walked into the room, where a hesitant-looking newcomer (who wasn't familiar to her, oddly) was trying to pick up her egg, a Quicksilver. Ah, she thought, more ToD-lost logical issues. "Hey," she said. "My name's Avalon. Who are you?" At the same time, she felt a weird tingly sensation from her egg. It was pulsating faintly as the hatchling moved around inside. Awww, cute. It seemed quite content. She looked around at the other four, all in the same room. Apparently, Invi had picked a Painted Thorn Back. Cool. Their team would definitely have some variety.

Distracted as she was by pondering the problem, Lucky almost didn't notice her egg start rocking. An insistent mental nudge accompanied the physical motion, though, and that caught her attention. "Ah! It's hatching!" Hurriedly she set the egg on the ground, not wanting the new hatchling to fall as it came out of the shell. "Come on baby....You can do it...." She murmured encouragingly, adding a silent encouragement. She watched with bated breath as the rocking became faster and faster, cracks appearing on its surface. As much as she wanted to help the little hatchling come out, she could sense the dragon didn't want her help. This would be its own triumph, through its own success.

Immediately, Invi noticed the cracks in Lucky's egg, but a mental nudge from her egg told her that she shouldn't interfere. She walked over to the others and asked them all, "So, when yours hatches like Lucky's is right now, what are you gonna name it?" She paused for a moment before saying,  
"You know, let’s have this conversation later - I kinda wanna see Lucky’s egg hatch, if she'll let us."

Avalon walked quickly over to where Lucky's egg was hatching. She stopped about a foot away and crouched down to get a better view. Any second now... She watched in excitement, still holding her own egg. "What are you going to name it?" she asked Lucky.

Invi grabbed Avalon's shoulders and pushed her slightly, so she could see. "EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE, this is so awesome... I wonder when the others will hatch.” She watched the hatching egg intensively.

Shace picked her egg up, realizing that the egg stopped melting after a minute or two of touching it. Then she rushed over to join the rest of the group huddled around Lucky's egg to watch it hatch.

Avalon watched as long cracks developed along the egg's surface. Apparently, they hatched immediately here, rather than in stages. She thought she saw a tiny snout poke its way out for just a second. Her excitement mixed with her own egg's anticipation radiation until she felt like she was about to burst. Almost there... she noticed her egg was practically glowing with excitement. Literally! The gold of the egg was shining in softly pulsing patterns of light. It was beautiful to look at, but she didn't really think about it much, as absorbed as she was in the first real dragon hatching she had ever seen.

Invi’s egg was ecstatic. Every so often she would feel slightly sick or dizzy from the egg getting over excited. She noticed Avalon’s slightly pulsing egg. She bent over and whispered, "So, what is yours gonna be called? Do you want a girl or boy?" She paused a moment. She wasn't sure if she knew the answer to her own question. Did Invi want a girl or boy? What was it going to be named? Questions....

Riv had been so intent on making the hatchling in her egg feel better that she didn't notice all the excitement around Lucky at first. Then gradually, her baby Phoenix started becoming more and more restless, although in a good way, so she turned her attention to the group gathered real close to Lucky and her egg that was... rocking? Was she seeing correctly?

Riv got to her feet and inched closer, careful not to upset her egg or any of the others. A few seconds of careful anticipation, and she was rewarded with a glimpse of the Keystone egg laying on the ground, with cracks in it that were getting bigger and bigger with every moment. She could feel her hatchie's excitement and it elevated her spirits as well. The egg wasn't just burning now. If it had been a star, it would've burned as bright as the sun. But since it was black, it looked more glossy and deep than ever before.

She nudged her egg slightly and told it to mind the cold flames seeping out from every mental corner. It reacted immediately, pulling them back a bit, not wanting to scare the hatching Keystone or the other babies still in their eggs. Riv could barely see Avalon's glowing egg, but it made her feel happy, kind of like Christmas always made her feel. She couldn't wait to see the hatchling. But for now, she concentrated on the rocking Keystone, hovering around the circle, almost invisible to the ooh'ing and aah'ing girls there.

The egg was hatching fairly slowly, so Avalon leaned over and answered. "I haven't really thought about a name. I think I'll wait until I see what it looks like. As for the gender, can we really control it? Do you think there are ne..." She trailed off, remembering the room she had slept in. Oh no! She'd been so tired, she hadn't even thought about where to sit. Did she put her egg down on one of the warm parts or cool parts? She couldn't remember! And if that really affected her egg's gender, she might have altered it already without thinking! Well, it may have been for the best. It would've been hard to decide anyway, and her egg had really needed sleep. "Well, never mind that," she said back to Invi. "I'll figure it out later, I guess."

Lucky didn't even look up from her egg though, focused solely on the widening cracks, though she did answer the others questions about naming. "Mica....Mica Flecks. That's her name." Somehow, she was certain that the nest she'd built had worked just as it did on the site. "Mica's my favorite of my Keystones online." She murmured. The name suited the Keystones, in her opinion. It was a bright rainbow stone, reflecting the earth loving nature of the dragons and their rainbow feathers. It always just seemed so perfect to her. With a sudden final crack, the egg shattered, leaving the little blue hatchling standing among the shards. "Ohh... She's perfect..." Lucky whispered, watching with a soft expression. The hatchling was about the length of her forearm and a perfect deep blue all over with just a few shades lighter blue covering her throat, belly, and wing membrane. With a small cheep, Mica looked up at Lucky, spreading her tiny featherless wings to dry as she shook off the last of her embryonic sac. As Lucky studied the little dragon, she realized something. "Huh. She's darker than usual. Odd.....But I still love her." No matter if she was off color, Lucky would still care for the little hatchling. The bond had been made and she wouldn't give it up for anything. Carefully, she picked up Mica, stroking the small head softly, eliciting a croon from the hatchling. "Yes....Mica Flecks is definitely her name. Mica." She murmured almost as if she couldn't believe the dragon was truly hers.

Riv watched from the outskirts, mouth hanging slightly open, as the little blue hatchling finally emerged from the egg. It was the first dragon hatching she'd seen after re-watching Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone again a few weeks ago (not to mention this was actually real) and it was the most beautiful sight she'd ever seen. The way the small hatchling stretched and shook itself out, removing the last egg pieces from it - she was entranced by it. Riv couldn't take her eyes off of it. She could feel her baby hum mentally, happy for the other dragon to have hatched. There was also a slightly questioning undertone to the hum. Riv figured her Phoenix was wondering when it was its time to hatch. She was also a bit surprised that it didn't know – after all, it was the one going to hatch. But she shrugged it off and focused on Lucky, who had just picked up the hatchling and was murmuring "Mica" to it.

Riv stepped closer, careful not to upset the small creature crooning at its owner, and whispered to Lucky: "She's so beautiful! You are so lucky to have her hatch already. I'm really happy for you." And she genuinely was, as well. She could only imagine what it would feel like to actually hold a baby dragon in your arms. Egg was one thing, but having a living, breathing creature that needed your support and help to grow... it was like having a baby. She snorted to herself, but it was true. It's just as she'd always imagined taking your own baby into your hands after the birth - that moment of wonder and unconditional love and faith... it was beautiful.

Invi had to stifle an awwww. The hatchling Lucky had was just so cute she could hardly contain herself. It was adorable, and had a lovely name. She considered naming her egg after one of her dragons online, after all, if it turned out to be one that she had on the web she might as well. Now that it was over, she turned round and returned to what appeared to be the nesting room that everyone had been sleeping in. She tapped a few of them on the shoulder: "Come on."

Avalon squealed inwardly as the baby dragon emerged from its shell. Oddly enough, it was a little bit darker than its egg, almost the color of moonlight. It was very cute. "Mica's a nice name," she commented quietly. She felt a gentle push from her egg. It was...? Happiness, definitely, and impatience. Almost a little bit of jealousy that she interpreted immediately. "Don't worry," she whispered to it. "Your time will come soon. I'm just sure of it." In the meantime, she still had to come up with a name. And it had to be something nice. No, beautiful. The best name ever! This would be her companion for the rest of her life - she had to think of something perfect. And she was convinced she didn't have much time.

Lucky smiled warmly at the others. "Thanks, guys," she murmured, stroking Mica softly. At first it had been hard to believe they were really in Mistland, even for her, and she had known it existed. Now, though, she wouldn't give it up for all the riches back on Earth. Not when she had Mica, the dragon settling into her arms, their minds linked permanently. Mica yawned quietly, as if the effort of breaking from her egg had exhausted her. "Go to sleep, baby. You're safe," she murmured in a whisper. The hatchling gave one last cheep, then closed her eyes. She was soon fast asleep, sprawled in Lucky's arms. She had to stifle an aww at how adorable the sleeping dragon was.

"You know..." Shace commented quietly, stifling a yawn, "I think we should take a cue from little Mica here and get some shut-eye. I'll introduce myself proper in the morning; right now I'm exhausted..."

Invi stood in the doorway watching them. She smiled and looked about. It was deep in to the night now, and they should probably get some rest.

Riv found herself yawning with the others. Chain reaction, she smiled slightly. Her head was quite jumbled with everything that had happened from the moment she'd woken up (not to mention her being here the first place), and she felt exhausted. So did her egg, apparently, as it was sending out slight waves of sleepiness to her. Go figure her yawns then. She followed Invi to the door, and passed her, murmuring: "Night, I'm heading off to sleep a bit. You coming or you gonna wait for the others?" She didn't wait for an answer, though, as her feet seemed to move on their own accord, and before she knew, she was back in the nesting room where she easily found her grassy spot. She hadn't noticed before that it was cool to the touch, but strangely it felt just right, even though she was more of a warmth person and liked her bed all warm and cozy. Guess having your own dragon, even if still an egg, changed things. She wanted to wait up for the others, but another, stronger wave of exhaustion hit her and before she knew it, she was asleep on the grassy bed, curled protectively around her egg.

Avalon followed Riv into the nest room. She was still thinking about a name for her dragon. She flipped over a few in her mind. Leah? Nah, too normal. Maybe something with a k would be nice. Kia? No, that was a car brand, silly. Well, at least she had decided where to sleep. She was freezing, but she got the feeling it was because of her egg. So she sat down in a warm spot and put her egg down next to her, names still floating through her mind as she drifted off.

Shace followed the rest of the crew into the other room, holding on gently to her strange liquid/soft egg. She moved over to another warm patch, "Is this spot taken by anyone?"

Riv was having vivid dreams. They were confusing, extremely fast, and restless. Mocking laughter, egg shells, body-less hands, darkness - those were the prevalent themes. There was also warmth and love seeping through, but her past wouldn't leave her be. Wait... her past? Was it hers or was it the egg's? She thrashed restlessly on her spot, still in the clutch of the strange dreams. No-faced statues laughed at her, called her names. Hands picked up eggs, but never touched the black burning one. Dark corners, lots of them. Loneliness. Eggs hatching, people being happy. She being happy for them. And the green-blue flames. Everything was surrounded by green-blue flames, and she was slowly drowning in them. No, not just drowning, burning, eternally burning. She didn't feel it, though. It was but a slight tickle. But there she was, surrounded by them, burning... burning... burning...

Lucky followed the others and settled down back in her original spot. At Shace's question, she shook her head. "Nope. It's all yours," she said with a tired smile. She curled up in her own little area, Mica carefully held in the circle of her arms. She wouldn't let go of the hatchling for anything. The two were fast asleep before long, curled together carefully.

"Awesome," With that, Shace plunked down, carefully curling around her egg and closing her eyes, "G'night everybody."

Invi walked over to the far corner of the room (as she didn't enjoy sleeping close to others) to find an extremely large pile of nest making materials. Hey, fluff, vegetation and flowers, all surprisingly soft. She lay down on it and started waiting, as she could never get to sleep instantly. But surprisingly, it came fairly quickly - it seemed her egg was influencing her again. It was quite a sleeper.

As the first rays of the sun penetrated the high windows of the nesting room, Riv started stirring. She slowly opened her eyes, blinked a lot, closed them again. She wanted to continue sleeping, she was feeling so tired and usually if she didn't have to, she never got out of bed before noon. Never. That just wasn't her. But judging from the light that was seeping in, it was barely 9. She wasn't sure why she was even awake. Maybe it was that nagging sensation that was telling her she needed to find a bathroom soon.

And that exact thought made her sit up so fast all went black for a moment before her eyes and she had to breathe slowly and deeply to clear her vision. Bloody blood pressure. It annoyed her so much. But then more pressuring needs took her mind over again. Dragons... they didn't usually need a bathroom. At least she thought so. So the only way for her to... attend to her needs would have been to go outside and find a nice big bush. She snorted and started laughing at the mental thought of herself squatting under a tree with her egg "watching" her. For some reason it was so funny she couldn't contain the laughter and soon the room was reverberating with her snorting laughter.

Avalon awoke slowly to Riv laughing to herself. Oookay. She yawned. "What?" she asked sleepily. She shook her head. Her braid was all mussed up with bits of hay sticking out of it. With a sigh, she pulled out her hairband and started brushing it out with her fingers. No hairbrushes. Oh well. She gave a mental good morning to her egg, which sat quite contentedly on the warm straw next to her. It replied with a feeling of cheeriness, and perhaps a hint of a sound? It was hardly discernible, if it was there at all.

A large mental shove woke Invi from her sleep. She had been dreaming about carrots and... music and school and... … … weird cloud thingies that glowed bright green... and... and... what was she doing again...?

Another, even more powerful mental shove came from her egg. She looked at it and was about to give it a rather annoyed shove back when she noticed something. Was it..... squeaking? Instantly, she rolled off the large pile of stuff and stared at it, concerned. It continued to squeak and crack as she... … wait... crack?

CRACK?!?!

"AHHHH!" she yelled, and hurried to the center of the room, putting her egg down on the softest thing she could find. She sat down and watched as a long, brightly striped black and gold tail smashed its way through the shell like it was flimsy glass.

And then a small red paw, and then two brilliant gold horns. She knew it was a boy; she smiled and picked her new friend up.

Lucky jumped up, startled from her sleep by all the sudden noise. "Huh, what, eh?" She looked around in confusion, then remembered everything. The hatchling cheeping at her helped those memories reappear. Picking up Mica, she soothed the little dragon and looked around. Seeing the fuss Invi was making, Lucky hurried over. "Oh, it's hatching!" She watched with wide eyes, remembering Mica's hatching the other day. "What are you going to name it, Invi?" she asked, admiring the new hatchling.

Shace had sat up when Riv started laughing, and when Invi shouted, she scooped up her egg and scrambled to the center of the room after her, watching the egg hatch with her. "Wow, looks like everyone's eggs are hatching at a good pace!"

Avalon smiled at Invi and the little dragon. She waited to hear Invi's answer. She had been thinking, too, about what to name her egg. She had almost settled on Khione, but she still wasn't sure about it. Too overused. But what then? What would its name be? She started getting frustrated a little bit, but her egg calmed her down. She'd figure it out. Even now, she was getting the tiniest hint of an idea...

Riv was so out of breath from laughing that she didn't manage to answer Avalon's yawned "What?", but when Invi suddenly shouted at her egg, she immediately became serious, though excitedly serious. She even forgot about the impending doom - a.k.a. the bathroom problem - and quickly collected her egg, heading towards the already-gathering group. In her excitement about another egg hatching already (this was really going fast) she obviously forgot to warn her egg about not being overly happy and burning everyone slightly. She kneeled down opposite Invi and watched with big eyes as a brightly striped tail pounded through the shell and slowly a small hatchling emerged. She was waiting to hear what Invi would name her lovely dragon that was now proudly cheeping on the floor amidst the wreckage that had so recently been its egg.

Avalon finished rebraiding her hair. It was a little messy, but better than the days she was late for school. School. Hm. I wonder how much I'm missing, she thought. A wave of panic swept over her. An unexcused absence! She couldn't afford that! She looked at her watch. 4:48 PM. Great. Apparently, it stopped working as soon as she entered this place. She jumped up and started pacing. Now what would happen to her GPA? Especially if she was stuck here for longer! She hadn't even done all of her homework for the previous night! She wrung her hands. Stress was building. This happened all the time, but never at this level. What on Earth would happen to her? She would get her lowest grades ever! If she stayed here long enough, she would even fail all her classes! She wouldn't be allowed into college - she wouldn't be able to get a job - her whole future would be ruined! She would be stuck - here. Shock hit her. Was this their plan? To make sure no one had anything to look forward to in their other life, so they would stay? Or were they all going to be FORCED to stay? If they couldn't leave at all? Oh no, oh no, oh no. This was bad, very, very bad. She sat down hard. Then she picked her egg up, just out of instinct. She immediately felt calmer. This time, she could definitely hear bells, faintly. She wondered if the others could, or just her. The waves of compassion and calm from her egg really helped her. She took a deep breath. Wasn't this what she had always wanted? She had magic! She would figure out a way to get home someday. Maybe. But she had a chance here. To adventure. To do whatever she wanted! It would be okay. And most importantly, she had HER OWN DRAGON. A companion. It was amazing. Not exactly the sort of fantasy she had always imagined, but pretty close! She would deal with getting home later. Right now, she had to figure out how to train her dragon. Once it hatched, anyway.

Lucky glanced over to Avalon, watching her stress building. She was about to say something when the other girl picked up her egg. That seemed to calm her, something Lucky could understand. There was just something so reassuring about the bond with their dragons that seemed like it could soothe the most anxious of people. Boosting her hatchling to sit across her shoulders to free her hands, she headed over to sit beside Avalon. "You okay?" She asked quietly. She knew it was all a lot to take in. Even for herself, who knew this land existed, it was still quite a shock to be here.

Riv watched as the obviously-stressed out Avalon plopped down onto the ground and picked up her egg, and moments later Lucky sat beside her. She wasn't sure if it was the thing she was thinking about, but she figured it had to do something with the life they'd left behind at their homes.

She herself was missing her home and especially her loving boyfriend, well, much more than a boyfriend, really. Thoughts about her work and what people would say if she didn't show up one day pestered her as well. She stroked her egg thoughtfully and let her feet wander. It always helped her think, just walking around with no real direction. And so she walked and thought her thoughts, not noticing where she was going.

After some time she raised her eyes, seeing for the first time where she'd gone. She was outside.

It was absolutely breathtaking. The sun was climbing high into the bright-blue sky, and she was surrounded by grass so sweet-smelling she could've stayed there forever. The colors seemed so very bright there, especially against the horrible gray weather back at home she had left. She heard strange birds singing and saw a forest not far away to her right. She also heard something like water rushing, so she figured there must be a river or such nearby. Turning around, she was again face-to-face with the beautifully strange building that rose into the skies. Now that she had properly time to look at it without worrying about grabbing an egg before all are gone, she could really see the amazing small details that were covering the outside. There were small carvings of dragons in every color imaginable. She could see almost all of the ones from the website, as well as lots that she didn't recognize.

Besides the dragons there seemed to be a sort of a comic-strip going on around the circumference of the building, higher than her head, but big enough to understand it. She followed it with her eyes until the building arched away from her and with it the story. Since it looked like a story, like those old long tapestries from god knows how long ago that depicted battles and history and whatnot. This mural here seemed to be the history of Mistland (the name was carved in many places along the picture). She walked around the building for a while, found the beginning, and got so absorbed in the rich history of this strange place that she didn't notice anything else for a while.

Avalon took a deep breath. "Fine," she said. "I'm fine." She looked down at her egg, distracted. "You know, I think it's making noise now," she added. She looked at Mica, curled around Lucky's shoulder. "Hello there," she said kindly. She always loved other people's pets - though these were hardly pets. She liked animals, and usually got along well with them. "I wonder exactly how intelligent they are," she mused to Lucky. "I wouldn't be surprised if they were wiser than humans. I sometimes think that even about normal animals," she laughed.

Shace turned from her spot next to Invi, to join in the conversation the others were having and also to properly introduce herself.

"Maybe it depends on breeds?" Shace suggested, shifting her egg into a one-armed on hold so she could stick out her right hand. "I'm Shace, by the way, since I didn't really get to introduce myself last night."

"I've had the same thought sometimes." Lucky told Avalon with a laugh. She glanced at Shace and reached out, shaking her hand. "I think the breed does play a difference. You know, little ones like the Glowyrms or the Lightfires probably aren't the most intelligent. But there's probably a lot of intelligence in dragons. Doesn't the Philosophia breed description say something about being big philosophy creatures? I can't quite remember. But Mica certainly knows her name. See? She perks up every time I say it." Indeed, the little dragon had given a small chirp upon hearing her name. "I'm sure we'll figure it out more though, as we get more dragons hatched. Besides, Mica and Invi's little ones are still just babies. No baby really makes much sense." She added with a laugh.

Riv had been wandering around the building for what felt like an eternity, reading the beautiful history mural. Now that she'd finally completed it, though, she felt for the first time the beginnings of a crumble in her stomach. It meant she was hungry and had to find something to eat soon. She could see some berry bushes not far, but she'd read enough adventure books to know not to trust any berries that looked innocent enough to be eaten. Plus, this was a different land altogether - maybe the veggie stuff here was not eatable for humans?

She figured she'd go back and ask Lucky since she was the only one who had known about this place before being dropped into here. So she turned and hurried back inside, finding everyone chatting to each other. She walked closer and heard little Mica chirp happily, with Lucky laughing, and smiled fondly at the small group.

"Hey guys. Little problem here. Pretty sure you'll have that soon as well. What are we going to eat here? I did see some berries outside, but I've read Hunger Games, I know not to touch berries that I don't know what they are," she laughed. "Lucky, you knew this place before you were brought here... do you maybe know what we can possibly eat here?"

Avalon said hi to Shace and then re-entered the conversation. "Oh yeah, huh." She was rather hungry. "What do you suppose the dragons eat here? Too bad it was just a painting of a peach tree above the Keystone, and not a real one," she smiled.

Invi walked over to Avalon with her new friend. She had figured out pretty quickly that the dragon she had picked was in fact a Painted Thorn-back. She was rather relieved that it was a large flying breed that she could ride when it was older. Not that it mattered, it was just something in the back of her mind that yearned for the air. She turned to Avalon and said, "You know, back on ToD i have a sort of naming system for my dragons. The ones with the same breed all have the same name. I only have one painted thorn adult, and his name is Monstah. So that's what I've decided to call him. His name is Terrador R. Monstah." She scratched Monstah's chin.  
"I hope yours hatches soon, we could be dragon riders together...." she said in a mildly sad voice. She turned round and picked up the largest piece of Monstah's egg. "Hmmm, I’m gonna keep this. I might make a new necklace out of it..." she set herself the task of finding something rough to file the shell down with.

Lucky considered the question, realizing she was starting to get hungry too. Mica chirped a soft agreement. "I think Silver mentioned blueberries before. Or rather, something similar. They looked exactly like the blueberries back home but they were double to triple the size. And peach trees are quite common. I bet if we go a bit farther beyond the hatchery here, we could find some. I mean, Keystones are common and their favorites are peaches. Should be cherries around too. That's what the Sakuras live with. As far as I remember, a lot of the food here looks like Earth's food, though the sizes are odd. Sometimes they're really big and sometimes they're little. Silver told me once about this rabbit she found, full grown, and it was small enough to fit in her palm." She smiled at the thought of the little rabbit. "Anyways, the point of my rambling was if it looks like Earth food, it's probably safe to eat. I think I'm gonna see if I can hunt down some peaches for Mica." She rose to her feet and headed outside. She paused outside to admire the view. It really was a beautiful place here. Keeping an eye out for any unwelcoming creatures, she moved towards the forest, searching among the trees for a peach tree. Mica crooned encouragingly into her ear as they searched. It wasn't long before they found a tree of ripe peaches. Lucky plucked a handful and sat down to eat them, feeding little bites to Mica, making sure she didn't choke.

"Well, let's get some food, then!" Avalon chirped. She followed Lucky outside. It was a nice day, though she generally preferred rain and snow. This would be better for walking around in, especially dressed in summer clothes. She started toward the edge of the forest, looking for nuts and berries. She wasn't into botany, but she figured she could tell a blackberry from poison ivy. She picked a handful of teeny tiny strawberries, about the size of the individual berries on a raspberry, that were on a bush at the edge. Then she sat down in a grassy meadow and started eating. They taste like strawberries, she thought. That's a good sign, I hope. She stuffed her mouth full of them. She was really hungry. She realized that she'd never had dinner the previous night. Maybe she should go look for more food.

Riv listened carefully to what Lucky was saying and then followed her outside, always making sure her little Phoenix inside the egg would be comfortable. She saw her heading towards the forest, looking for peaches, and decided to check out the berries she'd seen before. So she headed towards the bushes.

The sound of water came closer as she neared the patch of green, and soon she got glimpses of glitter from further to the left. She figured the river would be there. And where there was a river, there was also fish. So once her dragon was big enough it could catch her some and she would cook them nice and crisp above a fire. At least she knew how to make a fire without matches. Thank you again, all those sleepless nights reading fiction.

Once at the bushes, she noticed immediately that the berries were at least thrice the size of the ones on Earth, just as Lucky had said. They also looked exactly like raspberries, so she picked one, sniffed at it, and suddenly got a nudge from the egg. It seemed the egg was trying to tell her the berries were okay to eat. She popped it carefully into her mouth, and the explosion of taste was incredible. She quickly filled her mouth up with them, and then proceeded to take off her jacket and fill it with the big berries. Once done, she carried them back to the hatchery, sat down on the grass and started eating.

Avalon's mouth was still full of berries when a sudden alarm went off in her head. It was a noise like a bell on a clock, that sounded like it was right next to her ears. She managed to swallow before she cried out and covered her ears. It didn't help. Riv, sitting right next to hear, hadn't even reacted. Apparently only Avalon could hear it. She whirled toward her egg. Yes! It was coming from her egg! She backed up just a few inches and watched with mounting excitement as it started glowing brightly, like a little sun. The red shape faded and soon it was one egg-shaped ball of golden light, moving and fracturing as the egg hatched.

Riv looked up as Avalon cried out and saw her cover her ears. She didn't know what was going on since everything seemed to be quiet, but then she noticed her egg starting to glow golden, and moved excitedly closer, determined to see another dragon hatching up close, not on the outskirts of the group like the last times. She looked quickly around to see where the others were, then turned back and concentrated on the egg.

Shace wasn't really hungry, so she just stayed inside with her egg, waiting for the others to return from their breakfast foraging.

Invi followed the others outside with her little dragon by her side. She followed Riv for a while before coming across a river. Looking down at it, she saw something rather unexpected, but amazing. A pollen, beautiful and golden, was sitting on a lily pad. The beautiful pollen coming off it looked like dust in a sunbeam, glittering like stars. It also smelt faintly of vanilla. Unfortunately, the tiny dragon noticed her and fluttered away, leaving a glistening trail of light.  
Down in the actual river, Invi saw many different creatures of aquatic life, mainly the giant, 10-legged starfish that sat on the riverbed. She looked at Monstah, and he looked back and nodded. It was safe to eat. Invi turned and gathered some sticks, building a fire. A sudden splash, silence, than triumphant chirping told her that the starfish had been successfully caught and killed. She turned to her dragon and sighed. "Terry, I thought Thorn-backs only fed off other creatures when there was no other food available." Invi plucked the giant starfish out of the young dragon’s mouth.

But then, she heard a cry. Rushing over to the source, it seemed Avalon was the one wailing. She noticed the brilliant glow of the egg and stood beside Riv, who had gotten there first.

The glow faded almost as quickly as it had come, along with the noise. The egg finally shattered and an adorable baby hatchling shook the bits and pieces off. Avalon picked up the baby gingerly with both hands. Hi, she thought. The baby opened its mouth and gave a tinkly squeak. Avalon laughed. Now she had to choose a name. She explored the idea she had come up with earlier, but not given much thought to. Looking at the feathery, snowy white dragon, she knew it was perfect. But she still had to ask first. Looking at her dragon, she made a silent inquiry. Her hatchling responded with joy. She liked it too. Holding the baby dragon, she announced to the others, "Her name is Vuelie." The hatchling padded up Avalon's arm and climbed on top of her head. Avalon laughed again. Apparently, Vuelie liked high places. Avalon sat very still as her very own dragon sniffed the air and made a quiet, bell-like greeting to the others.

Shace stared down at her egg as it started melting again. She yelped as she realized that it was hatching, and moments later she was left with a puddle at her feet and a hatchling in her arms.

She had no idea what the gender of her dragon was, and wouldn't know until it had fledged, so it was hard to come up with a name yet...

The dragonlet chirped, winding round her arms, seemingly unconcerned with its namelessness.

Lucky scrambled to her feet, hearing Avalon's cry. Mica chirped worriedly, catching Lucky's concern. They rushed over, then relaxed as they realized what was happening. "It's a great name." She told Avalon with a smile, looking over the hatchling. Hearing its bell-like cry, she suddenly realized what the dragon was. "Oh! Now I know why none of us have seen that dragon before! That's the Christmas one!" She grinned widely. "Silver was talking about it, rather pleased with it. But we disappeared before she released it on the site and I hadn't been paying much attention to the egg description. They're called Snowbells." Mica crooned a greeting to the little silver hatchling.

Riv beamed as she watched the little silvery-snowy dragon climb up onto Avalon's head. Its bell-like chirps really reminded her of Christmas-time, and Lucky's answer confirmed her suspicions. "It really is a very beautiful name, I still have no idea what I'm going to name my little Phoenix... if it ever hatches..." she looked worriedly down at her egg which was still showing no signs of hatching whatsoever. Now there were 3 hatchlings that she knew of. Shace was still inside so she had no idea what was happening there, but she was worried by the progress the others were making. If she'd be left behind...

A small reassuring nudge came from the egg and calmed Riv down a bit. It told her it wouldn't be too long anymore now, that she just had to be patient and she'd be rewarded. Riv took a deep, calming breath, and turned her face back to the others, smiling happily at them.

Invi patted her dragon on the head. "Hey you, why don't you go and play with Avalon's dragon? Go on, make some friends!" She pushed the hatchling forward, and in return she got a rather annoyed glare back. Invi turned and walked back to the riverside, where her fire was now ready for the starfish. With a sharp rock and a large shell from the riverbed, she prepared the starfish and put it down on the shell, on top of the fire. It smelt of BBQ.

Vuelie hopped lightly down from Avalon's head onto her lap. Her bright, blue eyes scanned her surroundings. She walked nimbly over to Invi's dragon, who had already turned away, and gave a friendly squeak. Avalon just sat, watching the hatchlings and thinking. Snowbell dragon. Cool. Vuelie was also a nice name. She didn't know what the name meant (much like she knew very little about the dragon), but it was one of her favorite songs from Frozen, and therefore had a connotation both of snow and music. Snowbell. It was perfect. Her thoughts wandered again. She smelled burning meat. Huh. Then she noticed that Invi was barbequing some weird-looking thing. It was too far away to really see what it was. She considered going and investigating. She had long been vegetarian, though, and figured that as long as she could find other food, she wouldn't bother with it. Besides, she'd probably rather not know. Instead, she stood up and brushed herself off, and then went to get more berries, still keeping an eye on the hatchlings.

Riv had been watching Invi prepare some kind of a catch from the river. She couldn't quite make out what it was, but it smelled heavenly. Her mouth started watering and she decided to go to the river and see if she could catch something herself.

As she got closer, her hatchling seemed to stir inside the egg. That was odd. Wasn't it supposed to be mental-only until they started to hatch? But she figured their connection carried the scent to it, and it was probably really hungry after all that time inside that tiny cocooned area. She then noticed the starfish happily cooking on the flat stone, and in her mind she gave Invi lots of plus points for knowing how to cook, well, without anything. She chuckled, then continued toward the edge of the river.

It was glimmering in the sunlight, and Riv occasionally saw flashes of colors beneath the ever-moving water. There was definitely plenty of food to catch there. She wasn't too sure about the killing part, though. She had never killed an animal before (besides a few spiders and some nasty roaches and bugs, but those didn't count in her mind) and she wasn't quite sure if she was able to do it. But if she could find a way to just... fish one out, like with a rod and some bait, she could drop the catch onto the grass and wait until it stopped moving. At least she didn't have to do it directly with her own hands that way.

Just as she was thinking of going and finding a nice branch to make into a make-shift fishing rod, she got a nudge from her egg. It seemed the Phoenix was saying that it would catch the fish for her, as long as it got its part. She laughed at its seeming mistrust. The feeling she got was playful, though, so she didn't pay too much attention to it. She asked back: "But you're still in the egg, how are you going to catch it for me? I'm hungry right now."

With the excitement over, Lucky realized she'd left her meal behind. She rose to fetch it back, though Mica squeaked and demanded to be put down first. Chuckling at her imperiousness, Lucky set the hatchling on the ground. The little blue darling raced over to Vuelie and the Painted Thorn-back, chirping a greeting to the two. Lucky headed back into the forest, calling to Avalon as she did. "I found a nice and ripe peach tree if you want some. You found anything good yet?"

Shace sighed, deciding to go out after the others, not because she was hungry, but because she was bored, and she may have wanted to brag about her dragon hatching.

As she moved to stand, her dragon climbed up onto her shoulders, draping itself over them. "Now where could the others have gotten to?"

"No, not really," Avalon called back. "Just these little berry things." She held up a handful to show to Lucky. She strolled over to the peach tree. "Wow," she exclaimed. Those things were huge! She could probably share with her hatchling, if Vuelie liked peaches. What did she eat? wondered Avalon. It might pose a problem if she only ate, like, diamonds or something. They have to be able to survive in the wild, though, she reminded herself. But where might they live? Judging from Vuelie's color, probably somewhere snowy, if that was meant to be camouflage.

Lucky chuckled at Avalon's reaction. "I know. That was my reaction too. They're big, aren't they? They're good, too. Perfectly ripe." She reached up on her tiptoes to gather a few of the peaches, holding a pair of the large fruit out to Avalon. "Here. Try some. You could take some back to your hatchling. I think Silver said the Snowbells were omnivorous. They're a winter breed, so they eat whatever they can find." She was frowning slightly as she tried to recall the details. "It would make sense. And it probably can't hurt. If she doesn't like it, then I guess I was wrong." She added with a chuckle.

"I guess if she can't, she won't," replied Avalon. She still felt a little strange about the fact that Lucky knew more about Vuelie than she did, but even Lucky's knowledge was limited. Besides, she could just find out by asking the hatchling herself, after all. Are you hungry? she thought to her hatchling. Though she didn't actually hear the word "yes," she found Vuelie's message pretty clear. She picked a peach off the tree, walked nearer to the hatchlings, and sat down. Vuelie raced over, climbed up onto Avalon's lap, and took a big bite. Avalon dusted off the fruit and then bit the other side. It was good. She rarely ate peaches, but they weren't bad. Besides, anything would taste good in a place like this.

Starfish tasted awesome. Despite Invi not really wanting to touch the middle section, out of fear of 'putting herself off,' she had no trouble eating the legs. Monstah, however, had no trouble eating the center. He confirmed for her that the legs did, in fact, taste much better. But the fish really was quite large, and so she turned to the others and yelled, "I have some cooked fish here, if you want any!" She smiled at the others, and left it for them. She had realized that the fish’s skin was almost like sandpaper, and so she had set to work, filing down the piece of shell she had saved. She was happily doing this when she heard a loud roar, followed by the ground shaking.

Just as Riv heard the ear-shattering roar, her egg started to shake violently in her hands. She yelped in surprise and quickly put it down when bright blue-green flames started emerging from it. There was nothing she could do, so she watched with big worried eyes as the flames slowly engulfed the black egg. Soon there was nothing but a pile of ash, with nothing moving. Tears sprang to Riv's eyes as she was trying to comprehend what might have happened. She knew that the Phoenixes were born in flames, but as seconds passed and nothing was still moving, she wasn't sure if it had all gone right.

She knelt down as she felt the ground shake even more violently than before, and just then she heard a quiet chirp from the pile of ashes. She quickly pushed the topmost ones away, careful not to hit the hatchling. And there it was. Body black as midnight, with small blue-green flames licking up its tail, head and a few select other parts. The head itself was the most outstanding, and also slightly creepy, part of the small hatchling that was crawling out of the ashes. It was a pure-white skull, with living eyes that were moving fast, taking in the surroundings.

It was as if time had stopped for Riv. She kneeled there beside that tiny creature and watched it, committing every single detail into mind. She couldn't believe that this small creature belonged to her, and she belonged to it, as it very strongly reminded her. She reached out a slightly shaking hand and slowly, carefully touched one of the flames to see if they burned her. She felt the same sensation she'd gotten when she first touched the egg - like a current of electricity coursed through her body, leaving her hot and cold at the same time, but the flames didn't burn her. At least that was good - she would be able to ride her Phoenix when it was big enough.

Its tiny white paws were perfectly matched with the skull head, and it looked so darn cute there on the ground, squinting up at her against the glare of the sun, chirping happily. She picked it up. "What should I name you?" she asked it softly as the Phoenix climbed up to her shoulder and sat there, looking at the world from a higher point of view. There was no answer, but she got the sense of not needing a name right away from the creature. Plus, she wasn't sure if it was male or not, since she couldn't see any signs of gender at this stage. So she decided to wait until the perfect name would pop into her mind.

And then there came another, even louder roar, and her little Phoenix cheeped, scared, quickly climbing down and poking its nose into the crook of Riv's neck, like trying to hide. She looked around to see what dragon might be doing such loud noises, since it was pretty obvious it had to be a dragon. No other creature could roar like that.

Lucky called Mica over as well, sharing the peaches with the hatchling. Mica devoured as much as her little stomach could hold before laying down on the spot and going to sleep. Lucky just chuckled and picked up Mica, cradling her. She was quickly woken though when a roar filled the air. Both of them looked around, startled. "What in the world? What was that?" Lucky looked worried. "I hope it wasn't one of the more aggressive dragons...." She whispered, though the roar suggested otherwise.

Shace froze as she heard the roar and her hatchling tightened its grip around her neck.

She took a deep breath and immediately moved to head back to the nursery; the others would likely head back there if there was trouble.

Avalon turned around abruptly at the noise. Vuelie squeaked timidly and raced up her arm to hide behind her neck. She quickly stood up, peach forgotten as it rolled off her lap. But then she also heard a sizzling sound from nearby and saw Riv's egg dissolve into ashes. She watched half-distractedly as a tiny hatchling with a bone-white head emerged from the dust. Then another roar ripped out, and she ran for the forest. If it were something along the lines of a Nemesis or Azure Assault, she didn't want to be there when it reached the field. However, she'd rather stay close enough to see what was going on... She silently cursed her blonde hair and fair skin. She raced through the tangled vines and dark trees until she found a covered clearing where she could watch without being watched, hopefully. She squatted, preferring to be ready to jump up if anything happened. Vuelie crouched on her shoulder. Well, at least her hatchling didn't glow like she had as an egg. That would be a dead giveaway.

As the roars became increasingly louder and the ground shook even worse, Riv decided to head for the hatchery. She figured that the grown dragons, no matter how aggressive they were, wouldn't trash the only nursery they had for their eggs. She wasn't sure, of course, if the dragons understood what it was, since they were used to wildness and this hatchery was obviously man-made (well, Silver-made, she figured, in most parts), but she hoped that if the dragon won't see her and her hatchling it won't bother finding them.

So she ran for the entrance. It seemed like a lifetime before she reached it. The ground shaking didn't help her running at all, she was more stumbling across the grass. Finally, there was the doorway, and seconds later she was inside. The roars sounded much quieter in here suddenly, as if some kind of an invisible shield was between the outside world and the hatchery. It would be amazingly cool if that was really true - she loved invisible force fields and shields.

All of the sudden Riv noticed a movement from the corner of her eye and whirled around, with her little Phoenix letting out a low, quiet growl on her shoulder, apparently reacting to Riv's emotional turmoil. But it was only Shace, with... wow! Her egg had hatched too, then! The small silvery hatchling was wrapped around Shace's neck quite like a snake, except that it had forelegs. Riv's Skull stopped growling and instead sniffed at the air curiously, intent on making contact with the other hatchling. Riv stepped closer, albeit slowly. Knowing what effect the egg had had on the other eggs, she wanted to be careful not to push others away by something her little Phoenix might do accidentally.

"Hey, Shace. I see both of our eggs have hatched. Yours looks so awesome, I love silvery colors as much as black and green. What's its name?" Riv asked, curious.

"Truth is, I haven't named it yet; I don't know what gender it is, and I don't think any of the androgynous names I came up with suit it," Shace scratched the back of her head awkwardly, "What about you, have you named yours?"

The silvery hatchling's tail twitched and it snapped playfully at the Phoenix hatchling. Its mind wasn't as complex as some of the others but it was friendly and playful.

Riv laughed. "I haven't named my little Skull here either yet. I'm hoping it will turn out male, since I did let the egg sleep on non-burnt grass and hay, but I'm not sure if it worked. Once I figure out what gender my little one here is, I'll pick a name. Plus, I'm really picky about that and I want a perfect name, which is why I'll give it time."

Whilst Riv was talking, the Phoenix had reached out a paw and was patting towards the Quicksilver, quite like cats did with a toy. It seemed those two would get on just fine, as the other hatchling didn't seem to mind the Skull Phoenix's presence at all. Rather, it seemed to want to play with it. So Riv squatted and let her little dragon on the ground. "Let them play a bit, I think they both need some dragon interaction," Riv smiled.

Invi looked in the direction of the noise, and reached down to pick up Monstah. After she had the hatchling safely wrapped around her shoulders, she ran for the hatchery. Closing the door behind her, she hoped the roaring thingy outside had enough sense, or respect, to not attack the building. She walked passed Riv and Shace on the way in and walked in to the nest room. But it wasn't the nest room; in her panic, she had walked in to the second door on its right. "Well," she said, "I guess it's great to know this place has defenses..."

Shace blinked as Invi darted past, setting her hatchling down, "So what exactly is making all that ruckus? Did you see anything, Riv?"

Shace's hatchling darted for Riv's, bopping it on the beak/snout and running a little bit away, looking expectantly at the other.

Riv felt just as surprised as Shace had been when Invi suddenly dashed by, but since she didn't stop and went into another room, she figured she was looking for a place to hide as well. Riv's mind turned back to the now and here.

"No, sorry, I didn't see anything, but I figured it was probably one of the grown dragons who had been strolling around and caught our scent or something. Maybe even the scent of Invi's cooked starfish," Riv explained, squatting by the small Phoenix on the ground. "I don't know. In any case, I ran for the hatchery as soon as my little one was out of the ashes and it's much quieter here, so I'm hoping it has some kind of shield or protection from the big dragons."

The silver hatchling darted towards the black one, making a playful swipe over the Phoenix's snout and slithering away quickly, though expectantly. That was the invitation needed, and not a moment later the two were happily playing with each other, swatting at tails and trying to bite every part of each other's bodies that they could get to. The chirps and squawks made Riv smile - it was like looking at two kittens playing, and she'd always loved kitties. It also seemed to her as if the flames on Skully's body (it was a non-permanent nickname she'd given her hatchling in her mind, so as not to refer to it as Phoenix or hatchling or dragon all the time) were burning just that bit brighter. She allowed herself a sneak peek into Skully's mind. What she found was quite startling from the earlier dark memories. She saw happily dancing flames in broad daylight and heard an odd sound which reminded her a bit of laughter, but it wasn't quite as she'd expect it to be.

"They look so happy together. I hope that when they grow older, they can stay as friends..." Riv sighed wishfully, hoping against all hopes that she'd get a friend in this strange place as well, a person she could really trust and confide in when needed.

When Doves was dropped into the new dimension, she was kind of shocked. She had role-played with her friends a lot about this type of thing, but never really expected anything to happen. Well, here she was, with only a finger in the right direction to tell her where to go. Another thing that shocked her? That she felt the roar of what felt like a HUGE machine, and the ground moving in such a way that even for her it was difficult to move. When she turned, though, it was a dragon-ish thing. 'WHAT WAS I THINKING?' She screamed in her head as she dropped to the ground and lay as flat as possible until the creature had passed. When she got up she turned to what she thought she understood to be the hatchery, she wasn't sure though because much of the conversation had been one sided by the guy with the dragon, and they hadn't gotten to a total understanding before he took her to Mist-Land.

She walked to the building, looking at its size with awe, and wondered what kind of creatures were in it. As she stepped through the doorway she saw two other people, and wondered who they were.

Doves was just above average female height, with auburn hair and sea blue eyes. She was normally seen walking around in dark blue jeans, a plain t-shirt of random color, black tennis-shoes or scuffed up boots, a wide brimmed black cowboy hat, and a small shoulder bag that looked like it had been forgotten and sat on repeatedly, original color unknown, current color brown-ish? She was wearing her boots, hat, black shirt, and bag for this trip.

She stepped toward them while pulling out a pen and small note pad and writing down something. She held it out to them with a smile on her face. The note read "Hello, I'm Doves. Forgive me in advance because I cannot speak, but I can hear just fine most of the time. What are your names?"

Among the havoc, Avalon saw the mysterious dragon rider again. He didn't even pay attention to the giant roars. Geez, was he that oblivious? She considered making a run for the dragon. Maybe it would take her back to Earth! Before she could even move in its general direction, though, it turned and flew away, leaving a girl with brown hair and a cowboy hat behind. The girl, understandably, quickly fled for shelter. Avalon would have to deal with that later. She looked up as whatever had been making the noise crested the hilltop.

It was a Silver dragon. A big one. Larger than she had ever imagined. Of course she knew full-grown dragons were BIG, but not that big! It seemed to be struggling with a harness around its head, crying out in defiance. Avalon's eyes followed the reins to the dragon's back, where a fairly average-looking bespectacled man was sitting on its back. He seemed to be yelling at it, but whatever he was saying was completely drowned out by the dragon's bellowing. Finally, he took his hands off the reins (that would be scary, thought Avalon) and waved them in a complex pattern. The dragon stopped roaring and sat back down onto all four legs, sitting fairly still, though its sides heaved in and out from exertion. The man just sighed, shaking his head. Avalon didn't move. This was just too weird.

Doves turned when she felt the roaring stop. That stop, though, was too unnatural for her, and she shivered in fear. She turned back to the others beside her and wrote down she was going deeper to explore, though she didn't tell them why. She felt a pull to a very far off area and headed that way, passing what looked like to be hundreds of eggs that kept rotating around. She finely came to a lonely little spot that had a few eggs, but it was dark and she couldn't see anything, so she sat down for a while and tried to make sense of the information she had seen, felt, and heard.

Riv turned her head as a new figure entered the huge lobby. It was another girl (when were the boys going to appear, other than the original dragon rider?), a bit taller than her, with lovely red-brownish hair like Riv herself had, just longer. The most interesting thing about her, though, was the cowboy hat and the old rucksack over her shoulder.

She watched as the newbie walked closer, pulling out a notepad and writing something in it. As she closed in the final steps, she smiled and showed them the pad. It said "Hello, I'm Doves. Forgive me in advance because I cannot speak, but I can hear just fine most of the time. What are your names?"

Riv was a bit taken aback, but quickly recovered, opening her mouth to greet the newcomer. Right at that moment, though, the room grew completely silent. The roars had stopped. She noticed Doves shiver slightly, and she herself found the quiet a bit ominous as well. Before anyone could say anything, though, Doves had already written that she'd be exploring deeper, and had turned towards the egg room. Riv smiled, her eyes following the young woman as she entered the room, and then turned back to Shace.

"Wasn't that strange? And I wonder why the dragon suddenly stopped roaring! You wanna go peek outside?"

As Doves sat there, she felt the information settle and come together in her mind so that it made some sense, at least to her. At that point, she opened her eyes and looked around at the dark corner she had found and saw a colorful egg that would fit in the crook of her arm. She picked it up, gently realizing that this is where the pull came from. As she picked it up she felt like someone was pushing on her mind, seeking information. She stood up while sending a calming image to the seeker and walked back to where she had left the others with a small smile on her face.

Shace thought about Riv's suggestion, turning to Doves: "I think Riv and I are heading out to investigate that roaring, or more accurately, the sudden lack thereof." Stating her piece, she knelt down, looking at her hatchling, "C'mon, little one." The hatchling whined a little, slipping away from its new playmate and friend to climb back up on Shace's shoulders.

Avalon stood up. The man had gotten off the dragon and taken out some sort of book? She couldn't really see from so far away. He was writing in it furiously. The dragon was still immobile. Avalon edged toward the hatchery. She wasn't sure that she wanted to be around someone who could use mind-control, no matter how many questions she wanted to ask him. Vuelie stopped her, though. Avalon was surprised by a fuzzy image in her head of the man holding an egg. A Snowbell egg! So apparently Vuelie knew this person, and wasn't afraid of them. Okay then. That was good enough for her. She walked out of the forest and started toward the man and the giant dragon.

Doves looked at Riv and Shace. She was unsure she wanted to be outside when someone was working magic, but what choice did she have when she desperately wanted answers to her questions? Just then, she saw movement out of the corner of her eye. It was someone moving out of the trees just outside of hatchery doorway and she wondered who it was, looked back at the other two, set her egg on her feet while leaning back slightly so it didn't roll away accidentally, and pulled out her pen and paper for writing.

"Who is she, and what is she doing?" Worry was clearly etched on her face, but it seemed deeper than a young adult’s worry - it looked as if both an infant and a teen were looking out at the world.

Avalon walked slowly up to about 10 feet away from the dragon. The man didn't even seem to notice her. She looked down at Vuelie on her shoulder, who gave an encouraging squeak. Avalon took a deep breath and called out, "Hello?" The man started. "Wha...?" Then he saw the dragon hatchling on Avalon's shoulder. "Oh!" he exclaimed. "You're one of the recruits!" Avalon wasn't sure she liked the word recruits, but she nodded tersely. Vuelie called out in greeting. "Oh, you took the Snowbell, did you?" he said happily. "I was quite excited to find those, in fact. I hadn't been expecting anything of the sort. Well, technically, I didn't find it, but, you know. I catalogue." Avalon finally found her voice. "No, actually, I don't know," she contradicted. "Who are you? Do you live here?"

"Oh, sorry," said the man. He tucked his little book into his pocket, walked up to her, and shook her hand vigorously. "My name is Reginald M. Sercath." Avalon blinked. Of course. Why hadn't she realized that before? "Oh, right. That makes sense," she said to herself. Reginald's expression dimmed. "Oh, so you read those letters?" he said uncomfortably. She nodded. Reginald sighed. "I don't know what I was thinking, letting her post those online." He shook his head. "Frankly embarrassing, actually, looking back on it." He was quiet for a second, so Avalon changed the subject. "What are you doing with that dragon?" She gestured toward the silver still standing behind Reginald. "Trying to tame it," he said ruefully. "They can be very difficult if you don't raise them yourself. Since we all decided we would leave you all to be the dragon riders, we didn't take any eggs. Speaking of that, what this one's name?" He held out his hand, and Vuelie climbed onto it. "Vuelie," said Avalon. Reginald nodded. She came up with another question. "So how did you calm it down?" she inquired. "Oh, just a bit of magic." Reginald absently scratched Vuelie's head as Avalon's eyes widened. "You pick up some spells here and there, especially in the towns. That one's come in pretty handy, recently. It wears off quickly, though." Avalon jumped back from the dragon, and Reginald laughed. "Not THAT quickly. In a few minutes. Then I'll have to let it go back to the mountain." He sighed again. "Well, anyway. Where are all the others? Did they refuse to come?" He looked up sharply at the dragon hatchery. "If you're the only one, we're in deep trouble. Unless you're some sort of archmage or something."

"No," Avalon reassured him, "there are more. Probably hiding from the dragon."

"Oh, he's nothing to be afraid of," Reginald said offhandedly. "Unless you're trying to ride him," he chuckled.

"Well, they don't know that," answered Avalon defensively. "We don't know the first thing about this place!"

"Oh, right," Reginald replied. "We'll need to fix that, then."

Doves felt her paper vibrate from the sounds of people talking, though it was far enough away to possibly be mistaken as the natural motion of the air, but she didn't think so. Turning, she saw the one gal talking to some older guy next to a silver dragon. That intrigued her, so she went put her writing things back in her bag, but she no longer felt the egg on her feet. When she looked down it was rolling down towards the bottom of the hill that Avalon and the man were talking on. If she could have squeaked in fear she would have, but instead she raced after it as it kept getting faster and faster, the sense of too much motion making her worry.  
  
The egg had gained so much momentum, in fact, that it simply rolled up the hill. 'The physics here are way off,' Doves thought in passing. The egg, though, had finally ended its crazy roll of defiance near Avalon, though it looked like it could roll right back down that hill...

Avalon looked down, startled, as a shimmery bluish egg landed near her feet. What the...? Vuelie squeaked in surprise. Avalon knelt down by the egg, as did Reginald. "Well, hello there!" he said to the egg cheerily. He wiped off some of the dirt that had collected on it from its roll. Vuelie hopped down from his other hand and nudged the egg tentatively with her snout. Avalon looked up. The new girl she had seen earlier was running toward them - for her egg, presumably. "Well, there's proof I'm not the only one," she commented to Reginald. He didn't even notice; he was too busy with the egg, talking to it as if it were a friend he'd known for years. She rolled her eyes.

Doves eased to a stop when she got near them. Alarm bells were going off in her head about some random guy touching her egg, but the feelings she got from the egg were peaceful so she calmed down some. She reached into her bag for her pen and paper, but.....

Where’s my blasted paper? She thought to herself. She pulled out her pen anyway and went to start writing on her arm. But as she thought out what to say, the colors on the egg started shifting and forming letters that looked like Doves’s handwriting. It read, "I'm Doves, and I'm new here. You are?" and then it slowly changed the words to "Forgive me, I can't speak, but I normally can hear fairly well." And there was another word at the end, but in a different language, a language in Reginald's book, and it read "Liar."

Shace, despite leaving ahead of Riv, ended up behind her due to her short legs and general lack of fitness. She slowed down even further at the sight of the large silver dragon, though it seemed docile and after a moment she decided to return to her regular pace behind Riv. She arched an eyebrow at the strange man holding Doves' egg, hoping someone would explain what exactly was going on.

Reginald blinked at the message on the Mystery egg. His mind was a mixture of wonder, confusion, fear, and happiness. He had the urge to write down exactly what was going on, but he was strangely very afraid of this egg, all of a sudden. That last word... if it were just transmitting its owner's thoughts (which he figured it was doing, since glancing up he noticed the owner, who had started writing something on her arm)... well, that would be impossible. There was no way this girl spoke Archelic. Was Liar its name? That would be unflattering. Or was it calling HIM a liar? He shivered a little and set the egg down, falling silent. He had taken care of this egg. Why would it distrust him? He blinked again and waved to the future dragon riders who were coming up the hill. It seemed that all of them had dragons already. Good. He couldn't see all of their hatchlings' breeds just yet, but one looked silvery (probably a Silver, or Quicksilver) and the other was dark-and light-colored. He still couldn't tell. Confounded glasses. They had never helped much, despite his attempts to magically enhance their effects.

Avalon turned to Riv. "I don't think that's any sort of language from Earth. It's not too far from Cyrillic, but it's definitely not the same thing. It's weird, like a cross between Cyrillic, Egyptian heiroglyphs, and something completely different. See how that part at the top is, like, shaded in or something? No language I know of uses that." She looked at the egg in admiration. "I wonder what it says. That's a pretty neat trick, for an egg." She was quite curious about Mystery dragons. She figured that's what this was. She might stick around Doves (she had read the rest of the greeting) a bit to figure things out. And just to say hi, of course. She STILL hadn't. Vuelie climbed up her leg and looked at the Mystery egg as well as the last few words faded off.

"Oh, so that's why I didn't quite recognize it. Indeed, interesting," Riv looked at the strange shading at the top of the glyph, just before it disappeared from the egg. "Do you know what language it is?" she asked Avalon, and then almost face-palmed herself. There was one person who knew what language it was, and, quite rudely for her (which even surprised the usually much calmer brunette), she turned towards Reginald and inquired: "You seemed to understand that glyph. I'm just curious, but what language was that? And what did it mean, if it's not a secret, of course?" She stood there, hands crossed over her chest, with Skully staring up at the Englishman who seemed very uncomfortable at the questions.

Doves hadn't noticed anyone was talking, for she didn't have anything but her pen in her hand, and her egg was making it well known that it wasn't happy with her. She turned, though, when she felt one or more somethings approaching, which were only Shace and Riv. Though at this point, she was starting to panic. No paper meant she had no idea what was being said, because she just simply couldn't read lips, what was she going to do? At this point she had a flash back to very early in her childhood when she realized that she didn't "hear" like others around her did.

She sat there in her family's living room, no more than 4 or 5, and had been listening to a conversation her parents were having just around the corner, but it hadn't really made much sense to her at the time. "John, have you noticed, she still hasn't said a word? And what about the fact that she's always carting around that coloring book? Or whenever she isn't holding it, she's constantly touching something, especially when we are talking to her? It just doesn't seem natural." Her mother had continued with her questioning while her father had stood there, thinking, it seemed, but before he could reply, Doves had left the room.

Doves blinked as she came back to the present, before she picked up her egg, though, more symbols flashed across its surface closest to Reginald. It said something to the degree of "Just don't rush in speaking till she is paying attention to you." Doves then picked up the egg and cradled it to her while trying to think of a way to describe the way she heard to the egg and getting her hat off her head.

But just as Reginald was about to answer Riv, she noticed his gaze drawn towards the Mystery egg again, on which more of those strange glyphs had appeared. She peeked at them curiously, but just as she was trying to decipher them from each other, Doves picked the egg up and she lost them from her sight. Immensely curious now, she looked from Doves to Reginald, waiting for either to speak. Skully seemed to feel her excitement and curiosity as it looked up at her. It gurgled a weird sound, then looked at the other two. She'd even almost forgotten that Avalon and Shace were still there.

Avalon watched as more glyphs appeared on the egg. She tried to commit them to memory to write them down later, but there was no way she was going to manage it. She didn't have photographic memory or anything. Well, she could probably just ask Reginald later. She looked over at Doves, who seemed nervous, though for what reason Avalon couldn't fathom. She figured it had something to do with the egg, though. She looked around at Shace, Riv, and Doves. Wait, where were Lucky and Invi? She looked around. Lucky was still sitting on the grass, but Invi... hadn't Avalon seen her go inside? Maybe? Vuelie chirped agreement. Avalon felt her hatchling's curiosity acutely. Turning to the others to bid them farewell, she headed toward the hatchery. She didn't think that there was anything dangerous in there, but she would like to see where her friend was and tell her what was going on. Though it was hard to picture Invi as scared, she might be hiding from the dragon, unaware of recent occurrences. Avalon entered the door and peeked around. No one in sight. She set off down the hall, looking around. No sign of her yet...

Reginald looked up from reading the glyphs off the egg, his fear not as pronounced as it was before. "Well, um, I do believe the egg was calling someone a liar - most likely Doves, for some reason - and the second set roughly translates to 'Don't rush in speaking until you have her attention.'" He slightly stuttered at first, but smoothed out as he went.

Doves watched as she felt the conversation vibrate through her hat. She wasn't too concentrated on that, though, because she was explaining to her egg what it was like feeling the world through her fingertips versus listening to it like her egg seemed able to do. Absently, she put her hat back on her head and traced her fingers along the egg. Will you avoid making it so known that I can't hear through my ears? People tend to overcompensate, like I don't know the area around me at all. In response she got an image of a head bobbing and she sighed. She turned slightly to re-engage in the conversation.

After hearing Reginald's explanation of what the glyphs had meant, Riv just HAD to look at Doves, who was seemingly concentrating on her egg, brow slightly furrowed. So she couldn't hear, even though she'd written at first that she could hear just fine most of the time. Mute and deaf. Riv felt a big pang of sympathy run through her and she almost teared up, but controlled herself. It was obvious Doves didn't want people making such a big fuss about her... not functioning parts, and Riv was determined to talk to her like a normal person. Maybe just move her mouth a bit more when enunciating so that she could really understand. But she wanted to make sure the other girl felt like a normal person, not like a freak. She'd had that enough herself before, so she knew exactly what Doves might have been feeling about that.

She saw Doves turning slightly towards them now (Avalon had apparently disappeared, and Riv saw her meandering towards the hatchery from the corner of her eye), and she tapped her on the shoulder to catch her full attention. Once she was sure Doves was looking at her, she said: "I'm sorry about your hearing, but if you've gotten so far all alone, you must be a great survivor and an awesome person. Also, your egg is very cool and my little Skully here -" Riv pointed at her Phoenix who chirped in greeting, "- finds it very interesting as well. How does it do that writing thing? Comes in handy for you, though!" she finished with a smile.

Doves looked up when Riv tapped her shoulder, then grabbed her hat and listened to what Riv was saying. As Riv came to an end the egg sent a feeling of cold fire, not tinged with fear, but with comfort; Doves took it to mean that the Skull didn't scare her egg one bit. "I am not sorry for not being able to hear the way most other people do, so please, do not be sorry for me for something that neither of us has control over. Oh, and I do believe this little one can't wait to see old friends through new eyes." The words scrolled over the egg slowly enough for everyone to be able to read them clearly. Doves turned towards Reginald with a questioning look on her face. "So any idea on how the writing works Doc?"

Reginald looked mystified and he simply shrugged. "I have no clue, Doves, why your dragon-to-be can do what it can do, so I can only speculate, but your best bet for answers is to ask the little one."

Doves’s face fell slightly, but she asked her egg if it had any ideas. The images it used to reply were jumbled, but a similar tendency emerged. For every person in each image, there was a dragon that helped them in any way they could, and the bond between dragon and human was very strong. The dragons seemed almost identical in build, leading her to believe that it was the same kind of dragon. Ilio? She asked. She felt a slight nod in reply, then another group of images flashed by. This time the tendency was slightly different, the bonds between human and dragon was not nearly as strong, and the dragons being more independent to forage and do as they please. Iliya? She asked again. The reply was a nod again, this time there was two images that came to mind, one image of an Iliya, and one of an Ilio, and the two dragons seemed to combine into one egg.

Doves blinked coming back from the conversation in her mind with her egg - it had been less than a minute - she thought she slightly grasped what the egg had been saying. That her egg would do whatever it could to help her in almost whatever she needed, but she detected a sassy attitude that would be interesting to work with later on. "It says something to the degree of doing what it can to help me. What do the rest of you think?" The words scrolled by again.

Invi had just finished exploring the room she had found when the roaring had stopped. Apparently the hatchery did have bedrooms, as she had stumbled across a room with two double beds and a wardrobe. She made a mental note to sleep in this room next time night fell.  
Picking up Terry, she exited the room and walked straight in to Avalon, who was facing the other way. “Oh, hi AV, you know they have bedrooms here now, we don't have to sleep in the nest room.”   
After talking to Avalon, Invi walked outside and up to the big Silver dragon. Everybody else had, so she assumed it was safe. There was some new girl there... And a guy..."Uh, who is... I don't care." She had been distracted by the new girl’s egg. "Hi, who are you?"

As Riv watched Doves converse silently with her egg/dragon-to-be, as Reginald had put it, she got a little nudge from Skully. It was sending her pictures of happy, laughing faces, and warm peaceful campfires, with a mysterious shimmering blue color covering everything. Riv took it to mean that the Mystery dragon still inside the egg had no fear whatsoever in front of Skully, and rather wanted to be friends as soon as it got out of the egg. She smiled fondly at the little Phoenix and rubbed its head, much like one would do with a cat. Skully even went as far as to close its eyes and do a weird low growl. Riv laughed - it must be trying to purr.

Just then, her eyes were drawn back to Doves' egg, which had written: "It says something to the degree of doing what it can to help me. What do the rest of you think?" Riv thought about it, and then said: "Well, it's obvious we have a very deep connection with our dragons, something that's mostly impossible to get with another person. I mean, we can basically read each other's minds and feel when the other has especially strong emotions passing through them. Plus, I figured once the dragons are big enough, they are supposed to protect us and help us in any way to deal with what we've been brought here to do. So I guess your egg must be telling the truth. I would obviously protect my little one as long as it needs protection, and I'm 100% sure it will do the same for me," she finished, with Skully chirping loudly in agreement, and, to everyone's surprise, nodding it's head in a strange, bobbing way. It was so cute, though, that Riv dissolved into laughter, and couldn't say a word for a minute.

Shace said nothing, as she hadn't felt the kind of connection Riv was talking about. She snickered a little at the Skull Phoenix's nodding maneuver, scratching her own hatchling under the chin as a way to comfort herself. The hatchling copied the Skull Phoenix's attempt to purr.

Doves nodded her head in understanding, then waved to the new girl. Suddenly, though, she felt something move behind her. The Silver! She waved everyone to get down as she lay flat on the ground with her egg under her arm. Reginald gasped and followed close behind. He managed to get his mouth working and said, "Get down! Get down!"

Riv nodded to Invi, who had asked Doves something, and then looked at Shace, who was scratching the silvery hatchling underneath its chin. It seemed to try and purr as well, which Riv found extremely funny again.

Suddenly, though, Skully dropped from Riv's shoulder onto the ground, crying out in distress. At the same moment she saw Doves go down, protectively cradling her egg, and Reginald followed her a second after, yelling: "Get down, get down!"

Everything after that seemed to go by in a blur. Just as everyone hit the ground, the giant Silver dragon roared loudly over them, shaking its head violently, obviously trying to get rid of the ensnaring leather pieces. Reginald was too busy rummaging about in his satchel looking for something to do anything about the now-furious dragon that was shaking its wings and tramping around.

Riv was hiding Skully partly beneath her, trying to make herself as flat and small on the ground as possible. She motioned everyone to get out of there as quickly and unnoticeably as possible, then followed her own advice and started crawling downhill, hiding behind every rock she could find. Skully seemed to take care of itself, crawling along with her, managing to successfully quell its flames so that the only thing noticeable about it was its ivory-white head. Otherwise, it could've been a piece of dirt lying on the ground if it hadn't been moving. Riv was quietly proud of her little hatchling for being able to hide itself so well. She sent the thought on to Skully, who sent back a picture of a slightly smirking Dean (how in the name of everything holy did it know she was into Supernatural?) and, with it, a sense of "What do you think I am, a kitten?" Riv would've laughed, had the situation allowed it, but instead she allowed herself an inner smile and instead looked around to see where the others had gone to.

Avalon, having found invi, turned around and went back outside. Well, there was somewhere to sleep. That was good. She trailed out, not thinking about much of anything. She started thinking about Vuelie again, who was currently curled up peacefully around her shoulders. Avalon wondered if Vuelie knew where she got her name. She sent a message to her dragon. It was more difficult to do it with sound than with images, but she thought she felt it go through. She just let it float to the top of her mind, and she felt her hatchling stir. It stayed very still and quiet for a second, probably listening, though the noise was only in her head. And then, it wasn't. Avalon looked down at her dragon in surprise. Vuelie was singing. Beautiful peals of music echoed around the halls as Vuelie called out her song in her distinctive bell-like voice, starting quietly and gradually increasing her volume until the hall was filled with music. Avalon was amazed. I wish I could sing that well, she thought. Though to sing with a voice like a metallic percussion instrument might be rather weird. Avalon felt huge waves of joy from her hatchling. Most definitely, this was what she loved to do more than anything else in the world.

She reached the outdoors, and Vuelie's song faded away behind them. She walked quietly up to the others, lost in her thoughts again.

And then the bell. Avalon jumped down to the ground as Vuelie's call screeched through her head, just like when she had hatched. But now, she could tell something was wrong. She flattened herself onto the ground just as that huge Silver shook its head and woke up from the spell. The few minutes had passed. The dragon roared furiously, shaking its head vigorously back and forth. Finally, it took its huge claws and ripped its bindings off of its face. It reared up, majestically lit by the sun, and then landed, a claw inches away from Reginald, who had just rolled out of the way.

Reginald wasted no time in scrambling up and racing toward the factory. Later, he would probably scold himself for not protecting the riders, but he was downright terrified. As soon as he got inside the hatchery, he'd be safe, and then he could figure out what to do. Fortunately, he didn't need to. The Silver, after blowing a contemptuous snort of fire out of its nostrils after him, turned away and took to the skies, heading for its homeland. Great. He had put at least 6 months' work into trying to train that thing! Well, evidently, it had failed. And he had a new job anyway. He looked out at the future riders. None of them were hurt, luckily, just a bit shaken. He just stared out as the dot of the Silver dragon disappeared from view. They had no idea how important they were going to be.

Riku heard voices close by and decided to see what the commotion was about. His other instinct was to do what the voices said. The striped egg in his pouch seemed to comfort him as he drew closer, his black shirt was skin tight on his muscular body and his jeans where tattered and worn, but his pouch was on his back almost like a backpack. Growing close, his ice blue eyes saw the one by the name of Doves. His hair slightly covered his face and he had his white hooded vest on. The hood was up.

He thought to himself, It seems we have found ourselves in the company of others, my little friend, perhaps we can rest among them and enjoy company... He entered the group slowly and quietly, almost like a wisp of fog.

Doves started moving as soon as the Silver was gone. Blasted doc. He's a dang scaredy cat. Well, let’s see how the others are doing, she thought to herself and her egg. Just as she was starting to stand, though, she saw her best friend, and the blasted nut case was pulling his magic tricks again. Sorry little one, you’re gonna have to go in my bag for a minute. She stuck her egg in her bag and ran at Riku, hugging him when she reached him. Then she proceeded to pound him on the shoulder relentlessly with her fists while mentally screaming, "You BRAT, WARN ME NEXT TIME YOU SHOW UP!" The little dragon still in the egg picked up on the warring emotions and sent them to the egg in Riku's bag. The emotions mixed together so much it was hard to distinguish them, but the leading ones were seriousness, happiness, and shock.

Riku grinned. "Sorry Doves... I thought I could pull my trick on you, but I guess not." He rubbed his arm tenderly; he was quite sore from the hitting and from the long trip from his home town to the nursery, so he was not in the best shape.

If Doves could have giggled she would have. Riku had been trying to pull various tricks on her for years in attempts to sneak up on her, but all had been in vain, except for maybe one or two... She didn't dwell long on those. Reaching back she pulled out her egg. "Well, Riku, welcome to Mistland and let me introduce you to the others," it read, even though she and Riku had a connection that almost didn't need words to get what they wanted across. She turned quickly and pointed to each person she could see. First was Riv, who was down the hill a ways, and her dragon currently nicknamed Skully; then there was Avalon and her dragon Vuelie, part way up the hill; Shace was somewhere on the hill with her little dragon. Doves looked back at Riku. "Then there's the doc, um, Mr. Reginald, I do believe his name is." The egg read quickly. "He's in the Hatchery, I think..."

Riku listened quietly, watching where and who she pointed to. He reached into his pouch, pulling out the egg of his dragon to be. He smiled a little, keeping his hood up, and glancing at his friend whom he would do anything for. But he also saw that (at least for now) he was the only male that was in the area. Riku yawned from not sleeping and or resting for the past two days.

It was gone. Riv shuddered one last time as the powerful blast of wind from the Silver's wings gushed over her. She then stood up and shook herself off, picked up her little Phoenix, and turned to see where the others were. She noticed Avalon had come outside again. Riv thought she had heard the distinctive sound of Vuelie and her bell-voice before, but she hadn't been sure in the whole commotion.

Shace was partly hidden by the hilltop as she had run the other way. She and her little Quicksilver seemed to be doing alright, though. And then her eyes landed on Doves and the stranger standing beside her. That was definitely not Reginald, who, by the way, seemed to have disappeared. That little coward, Riv thought to herself, and Skully growled quietly, sending pictures of chickens into her head. Snickering, she started forward, making sure she looked presentable. He was the only real male person around after all (she didn't count Reginald - he looked way too old for Riv's tastes, though she didn't mind the dapper outfit he was wearing). The newcomer seemed to have strange black-and-white hair, and ice-blue eyes that were scanning his surroundings. He was holding his egg, though Riv wasn't quite sure yet what it was. From her point of view she only got glimpses of dark egg, though she thought to have seen a flash of light gray as well.

As she drew nearer, she saw she was right. There were indeed stripes of almost-white along the dark egg. It must've been the Nemesis, the dragon she had seen so often on the banners.

The newbie was yawning as she came up on them. "You okay, Doves? I hope the Silver didn't scare you all that much," she asked clearly as soon as Doves had focused on her, then turned to the blue-eyed boy: "Hi, I'm Riv, this is Skully - just a nickname for now - and welcome to Mistland! What's your name?" she babbled quickly, trying to keep her smile as normal and relaxed as possible. For some reason those very old emotions that she'd had ages ago when trying to talk to boys came bubbling up. She shook herself mentally, borrowed some sassiness from Skully, and concentrated on being normal and not acting like a freak.

Doves looked at Riv and threw back her head as if she were laughing. "The Silver shocked me, but didn't much scare me, thanks to this nut case beside me," the egg read as Doves pointed her thumb at Riku. "This is my brother Riku. All I can say is beware of his little tricks, ‘cuz he tends to sneak up on people," the egg read again. Doves smiled, happy that her brother was there. She got the feeling from her egg, though, that it wasn't very happy it hadn't known about her brother. In reply, she sent one of her very first memories that she could remember of him.

*She stood in front of a school and was so nervous that she was holding her bag to her chest. It was her first day of kindergarten, and her brother's first day of second grade. She so badly wanted to cry, but then her brother’s hands gently took her shoulders. "It'll be fine, sis," he seemed to say. Everything in the way he stood in front of her told her that she would be fine in this huge school. She nodded her head and slowly smiled back.*

Doves looked up from her egg back at Riv. "Oh and don't worry about us beating the living daylights out of each other, we tend to do it all the time."

Riku smiled and then walked over to a tree. Removing his bag, he then sat down, remembering a gift he had for his little sister Doves. He reached into the bag, pulled out his egg, and set it in his lap, and then pulled out an unfinished leather band with glass beads woven into it. The beads where blue as well. He began to work on it feverishly, wanting to get it finished. He knew she could hear if she had something in her hand like her note pad. Riku looked around but didn't see his sister having the note pad. She lost it again... my poor dear sister - good thing I have 4 more in my bag, but maybe I’ll find it later... as always. He grinned at the thought. He remained quiet and soon finished work on the bracelet for his sister. Riku lifted a beckoning hand to her.

Doves felt a mental tug from her dragon-to-be, and it showed her something resembling an image of her brother lifting his hand with the idea he was behind her. Turning, she saw Riku beckoning her, but something else caught her attention more. He's so weary, she thought in shock. His body was almost collapsing with tiredness, and he finally had the sense to sit down. She looked back at Riv, then waved her hand, asking Riv to follow her. Doves then walked over to her brother and gently punched him in the shoulder she hadn't punched yet. "Why are you even awake, little brother? You look like you should be dead to the world right now." Doves raised her eyebrows as the egg wrote away in clear view of both Riku and Riv.

Riku laughed tiredly since he was her older brother. He still held out the bracelet to Doves. He was on the verge of passing out as well; the arm he didn't hold out was wrapped around his black and white striped egg in his lap. He didn't even bother to pull the hood of his vest back. Despite being in this bad condition, he still found strength to do simple tasks such as finish his gift to Doves. His black hair then fell over his eyes which slowly closed as the extent of his exhaustion fully manifested.

Oh brother, why tax yourself so, Doves thought as she gently took the bracelet and set his arm down around his egg. After she did that she looked down at him and shook her head. He pushed himself too hard sometimes. She looked at the leather and glass item in her hand and smiled - her brother had used the two things that best reflected conversations around her. Leather covered most deeper sounds, while glass conveyed the higher ranges better. Tears started filling her eyes. Thank you, brother, she thought as she put her hand on his shoulder. Looking up, she smiled to Riv, then sat down, putting the bracelet on.

Riv walked with Doves to where Riku had sat down. She then noticed the lovely beaded bracelet he was holding up towards his sister. Doves took it, looking gently at Riku, then smiled to Riv, and sat down, putting the bracelet on. Riv was really moved by that, especially seeing that as exhausted Riku seemed to be, he didn't seem to want to wait with giving a gift that was obviously self-made.

But then the boy's eyes just fell shut there, and Riv quickly moved to catch him before he hit his head against the ground. "Come on," she grunted as she heaved him up, her nostrils filled with a strange aromatic odor wafting off the young male, "let's get you and your egg to the hatchery, you both need a good sleep." She motioned at Doves to help her part-carry, part-support Riku, and then started down the hill towards the hatchery. Skully had scuttled down from her shoulders as the invading hand had been thrown over it, and was instead leading them, proudly prancing downwards. At the entrance it looked back, chirped, and disappeared inside.

Once there, Riv saw where Skully was leading them. There was a door none of them had noticed before on the left. She went inside after the little Phoenix, and found a fairly large airy room with big windows that had curtains on both sides, full of beds. Every bed had a small nest-like hollow beside it, apparently meant for the hatchlings. She almost dragged Riku to one, carefully took his egg from his hands, and set it on the nest while Doves was taking care of her brother on the bed. She then sat down on another one and let out a big sigh. It had been a long day, and it was barely noon, as far as she could tell from the sun.

Doves shook her head as she picked up Riku's bag and helped Riv get him down the hill to the nursery. What a freaking lug, she thought when they finally got him onto the bed. Once he was placed, though, his muscles started twitching. Crap crap crap crap crap... Not another one! He just had one last night. Doves looked around quickly in panic. Last night it had taken both Doves and their father to wake up Riku while trying to keep him from hurting himself and them (and they had wished for a third or fourth person to help). She looked at Riv and motioned to her egg on the same bed as Riv. "Check the bags, see if there's leather straps... I hope we don't have to use them though." Doves prayed that Riv was strong enough physically to be able to do what needed to be done. "Nightmares..."

Riku began to tremble more and more violently from the nightmare.

*It had been only a few years back. He was at home, getting ready for bed, when he was stopped by a loud crash. He ran down only to see a stranger enter and begin to take the valuables and point a gun at his mother... He managed to get enough courage to tackle the robber and save Mother but it was not enough to stop the fire afterwards. Smoke filled the house and he went in search for Doves, finding her asleep. Picking her up, he rushed out the door, hoping Mother would follow. Sadly, she didn't get out in time... She would be forever ash. Later in that evening, Father came home to the horrific sight of the fallen wooden structure of the used-to-be house and to see both children scared half to death. The family was never the same afterwards.*

Riku began to cry as the nightmare went its course, unable to wake with free will.

When Riku started to shake and Doves told her to look for some leather straps, her tiredness was forgotten right then and there. She jumped up and rushed to Riku's bedside where his bag lay. Whilst she was shuffling through the seemingly bottomless bag, finding all kinds of strange items, Doves was trying to hold the now violently-shaking boy down and was obviously struggling at it, being quite petite herself.

"Come on, where are you..." Riv mumbled to herself, throwing things all over the floor. Skully cried out in distress and Riv looked up just in time to see Doves get hit by a flailing hand straight into the mouth. Just then her own right hand closed around a leathery ribbon. She quickly drew it out. It was a long brownish band, with other, smaller straps trailing behind it. She rose to her feet and rushed to the bed, handing them to Doves and taking over holding the poor boy down. His thrashing made it so much harder, but Riv was putting all her strength to it (thank God she had chosen that job as hers - she had more power than a usual girl her size) and managed to contain Riku enough so that Doves could get the straps around him.

When everything was done and there was nothing else to do but wait for the tremors to subside, the girls took a step back and sat down. Riv turned to Doves first and watched as the other girl was dabbing at the small cut in her lip. "Are you okay? Do you need something?" she asked, concerned.

When Doves finally had strapped her brother’s arms down, she took a breath and ended up tasting blood. Blasted… She sighed and dabbed at the blood. She wasn't totally able to concentrate at that moment, so she didn't notice Riv's concern ‘till her egg nudged her mentally. She reached for one of the pads of paper and a pencil that had been scattered on the floor, flopped down, and started writing. "I'm fine, are you, though?" She yawned as her egg wobbled from its spot on the bed and rolled to her. She picked it up and set it on her lap, then curled around it and set her head on it. Doves could still see Riv, but she was tired to the point almost nothing she saw made sense, so she just closed her eyes and set her hand on the floor.

Riku finally began to relax into dreamless sleep, but his body remained in a curled position. His nightmare was over, but he didn’t wake yet, not wanting to worry about another one coming. But for now, he looked at peace. He began to relax more, but he was still slightly suffering from the nightmare.

Riv relaxed a bit when Riku's trembles died off and he seemed to fall deeper asleep, still curled up. Doves was curling around her egg, head on top of it, eyes closed. Then a moment later her hand fell on the floor, and she was seemingly asleep. Riv sighed. Oh great, now I have to get her to a bed as well. Let's hope she doesn't weigh too much, she looks small enough, Riv thought to herself as she wearily got onto her feet and prepared to heave the other girl to the nearest bed. Before she could finish gathering her strength, though, Skully jumped down from their bed and, chirping excitedly, closed the space between it and Doves.

The hatchling sent Riv a bunch of quickly-moving pictures, and she couldn't make sense of them first. There was a lot of fire in it, with it moving in strange formations and something she took to mean strength and power of a Phoenix. But the last picture was very clear in her mind, as it stayed the longest. Skully was telling her it had the power to manipulate its fire so that it could be almost like a wall - so that nothing could go through it. This revelation was a bit of a shock to Riv, but she quickly cleared her mind - this was Mistland and these were dragons after all. Especially her very rare Skull Phoenix who hadn't been researched quite that much. I mean, people still thought they were "harbingers of misfortune", to which she only snorted in amusement. She had never found a sweeter dragon hatchling in her life. Yes, Skully had the unfortunate ability to scare people away with its chilly burning energy that seemed to radiate from every pore, but it didn't bother Riv, and as it seemed neither Doves (and her egg) nor Shace and the little Quicksilver were bothered by it either, she was fine with that.

But the biggest question that Riv couldn't get rid of was the following. She couldn't be burned by Skully's fire, for some reason (she figured that the true owner of the dragon couldn't be harmed by anything magical that was directly attached to the dragon), but she was sure Skully could use it to burn enemies if it had to come to that. So what was there to stop it burning anyone else other than herself? Skully felt her anxiety, though, and quickly calmed her down by telling her it was up to it to choose who it burns and who not. Riv could simply smile at that. Astonishing creatures, those dragons...

The exchange had only lasted a few seconds and Riv was still squatting beside Doves, who was sound asleep. Skully moved closer, placing itself firmly onto the ground, and looked to Riv expectantly, sending a silent question. Riv swallowed, sent out a quick prayer that everything would go well, and then nodded. The flames on the hatchling started growing bigger and longer, and eventually stretched themselves out towards the sleeping Doves and her mysterious egg. Riv hoped more than anything that the hatchling in the egg wouldn't think of this as an attack on its owner, and would instead understand that they were only trying to help. Plus, she was very curious to see how this all exactly played out.

Soon the flames were surrounding Doves. Riv was impressed that Skully had already this much power and self-control, even when it had just hatched a few hours before. Very impressive indeed. She couldn't wait to see what it could do as a grown dragon. Just then, the blue-green flames started slithering underneath Doves. Riv held her breath and was ready to jump in as soon as anything should happen, but Doves kept on sleeping and the flames kept on moving. After a little while, they stopped. There was now a sort of a latticework of flames underneath Doves. Skully then nudged her mentally and told her to slide her hands underneath it. Riv didn't hesitate. She loved touching the chilly burning flames that licked her skin so bitter-sweetly. This time, though, they stayed in place, and even felt hard. Once she had gotten a good grip underneath them, she gathered her strength and pushed off from the ground.

She had underestimated her hatchlings power. Doves was feeling light as a feather, so Riv pushed herself up faster than she thought, exerting more strength, and so wobbled on her feet for a second. She got her hold back, though, and, smiling from ear to ear, she slowly moved to the closest bed, setting the whole package down. As soon as Doves was securely on the bed, the flames drew back to Skully, faster than Riv would've expected. Right at that moment she felt sudden exhaustion. It wasn't her, though. It was coming from her hatchling, who staggered on its paws, its flames almost flickering out. Riv quickly grabbed it and held it carefully in her lap.

It was obvious. Magic ALWAYS came with a price, she had learned that much from all the fantasy books she'd read and movies and series she'd watched. She should've known this would exert her little darling a lot - doing something like that, manipulating fire, was no easy feat. She quickly carried it to their bed and set it upon the pillow, inquiring if it was okay. Skully sent her a picture of a weary smile, and told her not to worry, all that was needed was some rest. Its eyes fell shut. Riv sat beside it on the bed and stroked the tiny thing carefully as its sleepy thoughts filled her mind. Before she could notice, she was falling asleep beside it.

After following the others inside, Invi proceeded to the bedroom, only to find some newer people with eggs sleeping there. She took note that finally a boy had joined the group. Good for him. Actually, she was rather curious who this guy was, and also the other girl who she hadn't really got a chance to speak to. Walking closer, she saw the guy’s egg was in fact a nemesis; interesting. Oh. Her dragon was a bit too curious, and had climbed up onto the girl’s bed. It then proceeded to sniff her, move on and jump on to the guy’s bed and do the same. She gave it a mental nudge and told it to get off the bed. The response to this was a blunt no... Why did her dragon have to be stubborn? She sighed and opened the door to the next bedroom, which was upstairs. Come upstairs when you decide to stop being stubborn, ok?

Doves knew the exact moment she was surrounded by Skully's fire, and when it simply became a pad-like item underneath her. She was surprised, though, when she felt a bed under her hand. The egg sent a thank you to Skully and Riv while Doves settled fully into her watchful sleep stage - a stage that allowed her body to get the rest it needed while she mentally kept track of her surroundings, something that she had worked on since a young age but hadn't really pushed for ‘till after the fire. As she slept, she organized the day's events, with help from the egg. When they got to the most recent part, Doves got the impression of very cold fire, and she remembered the biggest rule of anything - to do something, one must expend energy, and in remembering, knew that Skully had probably taxed itself too much for its young age. Can you send energy? Doves asked her egg. The reply was a simple mental nod and the feeling of gathering energy into a ball. Then that ball of energy was pushed to Skully, melding with the dragon's energy, strengthening it.

As they finished, Doves felt the vibrations of someone walking, and summoned enough energy to open her eyes and see who it was. It was just a girl and her dragon, even though the little hatchling had come to inspect Doves and her brother. Doves returned to sleeping.

Riku woke after a few more hours of sleep. He then stood and walked around, leaving his egg to rest still. He held his head and looked around at his new surroundings. Since nothing really got past his ice blue eyes, he noticed the new person had walked in, but then he caught a glimpse of the old doc. Riku smirked. Maybe I should teach that guy how to be braver... Riku grabbed the doctor by the collar and led him into a different room to try and brave up the man, hoping it would work.

Avalon had quietly followed the others inside, deciding to observe rather than say anything. She sat and watched enough to gather that the new girl, Doves, had some sort of disability - maybe some type of synesthesia? - that made her deaf unless she was touching something. *Interesting. I wonder why that is*, she thought. Her first thought was magic, but that would be ridiculous. She was from Earth just like them, after all. Then she noticed someone else join them - a boy - who apparently was Doves' brother. Avalon wondered if her own sister would ever come. She probably wouldn't, she concluded. She rarely played Tale of Dragons, and she probably wasn't old enough to handle something like this anyway. The encounter with the Silver dragon had changed her view of this world. It really could be dangerous; it wasn't some sort of perfect haven, obviously. *What became of Reginald, anyway?* she thought to herself. Then she saw him walking down one of the corridors, apparently too embarrassed to come up and talk to them again. Well, he ought to be ashamed. We all could've died, she thought. Still, what would he have done? She followed Riv and Doves carrying the new "rider," as Reginald called them, into a bedroom. A bedroom? And they had all slept in the nesting room last night, she laughed to herself. How did Riv find it? And then she realized Riv hadn't. Her hatchling had. How did Skully know about this room? ESP? Riv had one smart dragon, anyway. Then Doves' brother started moving. She wanted to help, or do something, but she didn't know what, and they seemed to have it under control anyway, so she stayed put in the corner. Finally, it was over with, and she relaxed a bit. So Doves was mute and partially deaf, and her brother had seizures. Or something. It was strange, but not in a bad way. It reminded her distinctly of some story characters she had come up with during her hours of boredom at school. They were Creators, almost like gods, but in return for their power, they were both cursed. One, Miraline, couldn't speak (like Doves, although at least Doves had a mouth), and the other mutated everything she touched. Still, they were good people and very supportive of each other. Judging by the bracelet and how careful Doves was with her brother, they seemed to be the same way. Avalon looked forward to getting to know them. Especially if they are actually magic, she thought to herself. Once Reginald was ready to teach them things, that was going to be the first thing she asked about. She had always dreamed of having magical powers, of any sort. She felt around her neck and touched her marble pendant absently, her favorite necklace since she had gotten it from her mother many years ago. She had always imagined it gave her magic, or at least strength. Maybe in this world, it would be possible... She held it tight in her fist, closed her eyes, and concentrated on it. She sat like that, motionless, for several seconds. Just when she was about to give up, she felt a cold breeze over her arm. She was shocked, but she maintained her focus. It whipped silently around her hair and face as she squeezed her eyes shut. She was ecstatic, but somewhat disbelieving as well. She opened her eyes tentatively. The wind didn't die down. She looked down at her lap. Vuelie was glowing gold again, brighter than she had as an egg. Her eyes were shut, too, and she trembled with exertion as the wind swirled up and down around her and Avalon. She tapped Vuelie on the head. The hatchling looked up at her and sent feelings of happiness, exhaustion, and hope. Vuelie had done all that for her. Avalon wasn't sure whether to laugh, cry, or be amazed, so she sort of did all three at once, picking the tired Vuelie up and hugging her (as best she could when she was so small). She looked up. No one had noticed, except... wait, hadn't Doves been sitting against the wall a minute ago? Now she was on a bed next to her brother's, asleep. Avalon looked curiously at Riv, who was holding her hatchling. Soon both of them had fallen asleep as well. Perhaps she would follow suit, but... she wasn't all that comfortable with it as she had been before. Maybe because it wasn't an all-girl troupe anymore. Instead, she held Vuelie carefully and walked back to the nesting room to rest and let her hatchling get some sleep. She kept her eyes open, though, and just thought. She wasn't all that tired; it was still about noon-ish, by the position of the sun. Eventually, though, she closed her eyes just out of lack for anything to do, and fell into a light sleep.

Doves woke fully to Reginald's gasp and a sharp mental punch from her egg. Oy vey.... do I have to bind him to the floor? Doves thought as she uncurled herself from around the egg and walked after her brother, leaving the egg on the bed. I'll be back shortly, little one, she said to the egg as she turned the corner.  
  
She walked a ways before she found her brother and Reginald. Riku had the poor man cornered. Doves walked up, grabbed her brother's ear, and smacked him upside the head, before either of them even knew she was there. Afterwards, she shoved her brother back a few steps, then pointed angrily to the dorm-room, the message clear. She turned back to Reginald and bowed formally in the way of the Japanese, asking for forgiveness on her brother's behalf (considering she forgot her paper, again...).

Riku walked back to the dorm, rubbing his head from when he got hit. He then snuck past the dorm room to one of the trees. He took off his white hooded vest and easily climbed up the tree, his black and white hair dangling in his face as he reached a thick branch high up. He then started doing multiple sets of upside-down sit ups. This was part of his ongoing training ritual, mainly to clear his mind. His muscles strained under the fabric of his shirt.

Avalon sat up straight again as her hand was nudged gently by Vuelie's snout. She stood up and brushed hay off her jeans, then picked Vuelie up to wander around the hatchery. She tiptoed into the dorm room. Well, Doves and her brother (she still didn't know his name) were gone, and everyone else was still asleep. Well, assuming Invi was still upstairs. She walked down a random hall and soon found herself completely lost. Her hatchling chirped to her reassuringly, though, and jumped down from her arms, leading her forward. So apparently not only Skully knew his way around here. Or her way. Avalon still didn't know.

Soon she found herself at a doorway, and looked inside. She gasped. Metallic and leather armor lined the walls in a huge hall full of exhibits and things, almost like a museum. There were no glass cases over anything, though. Most of them seemed to be archaic weapons and armor, though there were a few things that really didn't seem to belong there, like a shiny glass ball filled with quick-moving green liquid (game reference that I bet nobody gets :D) or a thick purple-bound book with spikes on the binding. She decided to look around a bit more, while Vuelie just padded around and sniffed at the displays.

Riv snorted and turned onto her side, slowly peeling her eyes open. Well, that had been a nice little nap. She definitely felt much better now. Her next thought went directly towards Skully, who was just stretching out on the pillow like a kitten. It actually reminded Riv a lot of a kitten for now, without the wings and just little flames, like patches of strange-colored fur, on it. She smiled lovingly at the hatchling who reached out with its snout and they bumped their noses. It was like kissing a little child on the nose.

Riv then sat up, stretched, and looked around. Doves and Riku were gone, the straps laying forgotten on the ground. She thought she saw someone pass the dorm door, but when she looked directly in the direction, there was no one there.

It seemed to be a few hours past noon, judging by the slanting sunrays that shone in from the high windows. The dark-haired girl really wished she could at least have a watch or a cell phone with her. She was really bad at guessing the time or how long or heavy something was etc. etc. She was just really bad at guessing things, but she had to apparently get used to guessing the time. At least the sun was out - if it had been gray and raining outside, she would've had an even harder time.

Skully got up from the pillow and trotted over to Riv, climbing up onto her shoulders. Riv rose and walked out of the dorm. Then she had a decision to make - discover new rooms inside, or go and be outside until the sun set? She decided to go outside and find something to eat when her stomach reminded her with a low grumble that she still hadn't eaten anything with all the excitement today. So she turned towards the exit and started walking.

Coming outside, she blinked in the bright sun, squinting around to see. The river wasn't visible from here, but she knew it was there. The trees were closer, but she wasn't in the mood for peaches. Fish, however, sounded really good. She began in the direction of the river, looking around on the ground to find something sharp. If she was to fish, she needed either a rod and some line, or she would just make a rough spear and try out her reflexes.

Just as the river came into view, Skully screeched happily and clambered down from its high sitting place. It quickly ran towards the river, Riv close behind, not wanting anything to happen to her little one. She shouldn't have worried, though. The hatchling looked enough like a cat, but had none of that cat adversity to water. Instead, it seemed to swim just as well as any amphibian. Well, that would make sense, Riv shrugged to herself. Dragons were technically huge reptiles, and reptiles were the other branch that had come from amphibians.

Not a minute later, the little creature appeared on the riverbank, dragging along a fish much bigger than itself by its tail. It chirped proudly and dumped the fish unceremoniously at Riv's feet. The girl started laughing. "I have a swimming cat," she said out loud, patting Skully on the head and sending it thoughts of thanks and proudness. All that came back was a "I help you, you help me." So it was cheeky as well. And then a thought struck Riv. At first the dragon had only communicated through pictures it'd gotten from her mind and from other minds, not being able to exactly say out things in any language Riv could speak. Now, though, it was sending her real words, not pictures. It was like a voice only she could hear inside her mind. And it wondered Riv. Skully was learning fast, very fast indeed.

After Reginald nodded his understanding, Doves sighed and ran back to the dorm room area to grab her egg and put the bags back together. Why? Doves heard in her thoughts, and it came with an image of the bags before everything had been scattered around the room. She smiled as she sent an image back of all the items on the floor and beds. How would I find anything if I didn't? was Doves’ reply back. She then started picking things up and placing them in their respective bags.

When Doves got done, she noticed that her brother had left his egg. How? How could he forget his egg!? she mentally screamed and wished she could punch him again. Just then her gut grumbled at her. What should we do for food, little one? asked Doves to her egg. She got an image of a river outside. She stuffed her shoulder bag into her brother’s bag, then his egg, and went out to find the river.

Doves looked kind of funny as she left the nursery. She wore her brother's bag like a backpack, while carrying her egg like a football as she ran through the woods. She was fully enjoying the experience when she made it to the river. That was far too short.

Riku continued his work out, and began grunting with the continuous strain on his muscles. He then sat on top of the branch. He heard the girls nearby minding their own business. He leaned back quietly. He didn’t really forgot his egg, he had just wanted the dragon to be inside of it to be well rested. He then coughed loudly and then had a coughing fit and couldn't stop. Riku fell off the branch and fell to the ground below. "WHOA!!!" He did a roll to help save himself when he hit the ground, then sprawled out on his back and closed his eyes, feeling a bit of pain but not a whole lot.

Doves felt the thud of Riku landing somewhere behind her, and her egg's shock in her head. Turning, she pulled her bag from her brother’s pack and unceremoniously dropped his bag on his chest. She brought her hand to her mouth in a fake gasp and fake shock in her eyes. Quickly she turned to hide her laughter and walked back towards the river, while picking up a long and thin, but sturdy looking, branch and a medium sized branch that was about 5 inches long. Sitting down on the edge of the river she dug a small hole to place her egg in, then pulled out a knife and some thin cord.

Before Doves started whittling at the blockish piece of wood she had grabbed, she saw Riv. She waved, then started carving, changing the medium branch into a crude hook slightly shorter than her thumb. Doves held it up and inspected it. It looked durable, and the wood felt like it could withstand being pulled on. She nodded in satisfaction, then slipped the cord through the hole she had carved out. Setting those down, she picked up the twitch she had picked up with the other branch. She whipped it around testing its flexibility. Again she nodded, then took her knife and cut a small notch in it, then tied the other end of the cord to it. She flicked the hook out, hoping the fish would find it interesting and try a bite.

Riku remained on his back and eyes closed. It really did look like he had passed out. He had felt his sister drop his bag on his chest, but he did not react to it, knowing her violent and playful nature because of their bond. He thought quietly, finally opened his eyes, looked up at the sky, and began to daydream.

"At least I got to sleep a bit last night... I probably would have passed out if I didn’t do so... but now that I have my sister back… I’ll protect her and the others with my life, if I have to... with my dragon to help... like I promised mother… No matter what happens, Doves will be safe..." He smiled softly at his quiet little speech to himself.

Invi had awoken to the sickly smell of the smoke her dragon was puffing at her. Terry had fallen asleep next to her head and, although he did not snore, Terridor blew a small cloud of purple smoke from his nostrils that changed color as it rose. Invi sat up and gently picked up her young dragon while he slept. She inspected him and took note - he had gained one more red stripe on his tail that had grown 3 cm during his rest. She also took note of the two lumps on his back, between his shoulder blades. Hmmm.....  
"Come on, you." She shook her dragon awake. Proceeding to the far door, she found it was not the same one she came through. It didn't matter, though, as what was in the next room was, well, awesome. It was a huge 2-story armory, complete with huge dragon armor. She could hear someone walking around downstairs. Peering over the balcony, Invi saw Avalon. She shouted down to show she was there before exploring, eventually stopping at a large purple crystal sitting between a set of Bastet dragon armor, a golden crown adorned with some sort of purple gem with tuffs of white fur stuck to it here and there, and a large, old looking, one-and-a-half-meter-long knife-sword.

Riku got up and walked around, leaving his vest near the tree and putting the bag around his shoulders. As he walked, he found one of his sister's note books on the ground and picked it up. "I thought she lost it somewhere," he grinned and put it in his bag. Something was bothering him in the back of his mind, but he just couldn't place his finger on what it was. When he reached the hill from before, he removed his black shirt, revealing an 8-pack and also showing he was strong for his young age. He began doing push-ups, planning not to stop until someone walked up and told him to. He got into a rhythm and his mind went blank.

Avalon looked up to see Invi walking around on the upper level. "Hi!" she called back, and waved. Then she kept looking around. She would reach the stairs and go up eventually, but she wanted to see all of this stuff first.

She walked up to a long, shiny green-tinged sword. She lightly touched the wooden handle and felt a weird sensation all over her skin. She pulled away quickly. She stepped over to the next sword. This one was oddly tiny, like it was meant for a five-year-old or something. It was deadly sharp, though. No one in their right mind would give that to a kid. She continued along the sword exhibit. After about the eighth one, she noticed that below each, there was a small golden-bronze plaque with a name in fancy cursive script. They ranged from the most normal of names (there was a sapphire-handled steel sword belonging to a "Jacob Carpenter") to the strangest (there was one labeled "Turrileal Rispake Feldenwyrm," and another she couldn't even pronounce because it contained nothing but vowels), but all, somehow, in her own lettering system. Reginald had probably done it. She moved on to where there was a whole section just on what looked like earrings. They might have been something else, though. Regardless, they would be awesome as earrings, she thought to herself. Vuelie chirped in agreement, which caused Avalon to wonder how she even knew what an earring was. She passed that isle and then stopped. Here was an entire section on bows. COOL!!! Avalon took in the look of every one. A few looked like they were made in the finest way out of impeccably polished wood and perfect, uniform strings. Most of them, however, were much more natural-looking, made of materials that could probably be found in the forest - long grass, tree bark, things like that. Some of those gave her pause, though, because they glowed just the slightest bit with different colors of light. Then she passed one that really made her stop, mostly out of alarm. It was made of plastic - was that right? It had to be - of a very black hue, but polished, so it seemed even darker. It was covered in different boxes and weird panels and green and red light bulbs. It seemed horribly out of place here, and she could tell that Vuelie instinctively didn't like it. Avalon had to suppress the urge to destroy it, which was weird. Instead, she walked forward quickly, not even bothering to stop and read the name underneath it. She passed more bows until she looked at another that made her stop, but this time in a good way. It was beautiful. It wasn't one of the polished ones, but it was decorated with tiny metal designs along the hand-hold and the ends made of such a light, silvery metal that they almost seemed clear. The bowstring was made of grass that was somehow still a vibrant green, even after being separated from the plant for so long. Avalon knelt to read the name plate below it. It said, "Treana Dilya Larkspur." Another strange name. Why put their middle name? She wondered. She touched the bow. No weird feelings this time. Gingerly, she picked it up and held it. She had always wanted to do archery - she even had her own bow, back at her home, but she had never used it because she hadn't had a place to practice. Well, that wouldn't be a problem now, she thought, thinking of the large field outside. Still, she would hardly feel right about taking this one, and besides, she didn't have any arrows. Maybe she could make her own. She put the bow back and moved on.

When the Silver had attacked, Shace had run quite a distance to escape its wrath.

Away from the hatchery. Away from any place familiar to her. It had been an interesting, somewhat unpleasant and terrifying adventure to get back.

She made it back long after everyone had gone to bed for the afternoon. She never did manage to find the bedrooms and ended up sleeping on the floor again.

And she still woke up very soon after that, though that was partially her dragon's fault. It tugged at her shirt with chirp/growling noises and she was up and groggily wandering the complex, following her little hatchling wherever it chose to roam.

Riku heard the chirping and decided to go investigate. He left his shirt off, but put his bag back over his shoulder. He paused a moment, turned around and grabbed his shirt, then stuffed it in his bag around his egg. His black and white hair swung over his ice blue eyes. He then walked over to the tree he fell out of and grabbed his white hooded vest and put that on. Then he entered the building to where he heard the noise and saw Shace and the hatchling. Tilting his head curiously, he got closer with a slight smile on his face. He then heard a noise in his head. It took him a moment to realize it was his egg trying to communicate with him. He relaxed for the second time of the day and laid sprawled out on his back placing his bag right next to him. He stared up at the ceiling, thinking about his sister, hoping she was getting around OK even though he knew her egg would tell her if something bad was going to happen, or so he hoped.

The hatchling noticed Riku, and chirped excitedly and cheerily, changing directions and scrambling towards him.

Shace sleepily followed the hatchling, only acknowledging Riku when the hatchling reached his feet. "Oh... um... hello there..."

Riv was searching for some firewood to build a cooking fire out of when she noticed Doves and her egg had joined her and Skully on the riverbank. She waved back and watched for a moment how Doves whittled the branch she'd picked up somewhere. She whistled quietly to herself - the girl was sure talented. She wasn't sure she could've done something like that. Plus, she didn't have even a knife with her.

Pondering about that possible setback (at least until Skully grew big enough to have teeth or claws bigger than any knife), she continued to collect every branch that was dry, and finally carried a nice bunch back to where Skully was still happily fishing. It had, in the meanwhile, already collected more than Riv could eat in a week, so she figured she'd just cook for the others as well. Obviously given she could even start that darn fire.

Kneeling down she started setting up the fire. At first she made a crude ring of some stones that were slightly wet. Should keep the fire in place. Then came a few of the bigger logs for the "skeleton" of the fire, with tiny branches and such stuffed in between. The other bigger ones went on top, and finally she carefully stuck in most of the dry moss she'd found on a nearby old tree. If J-Law could do it on Hunger Games, she could do it in Mistland.

Riv then sat down cross-legged, set the last piece of moss in front of her, and grabbed the round stick she'd especially chosen for this very important task. A deep breath, and she started to furiously twirl the stick inside the moss, hoping to get a fire going.

What felt like ages later she huffed with exertion, her hands cramped and hurting, and let the stick fall. Not even the tiniest hope of smoke. Nothing. How did they do it, then? How? She was fuming. All those adventure books, all those movies, and all of it just a trick? God, she hated such things. Then suddenly she heard a distinctive laughter, kind of like a growl, but lighter. She looked around, and then realized it was coming from her own mind. It was Skully. Her own hatchling was actually laughing at her. She felt ashamed and angry at that tiny little creature who had turned out to be better in everything.

I'm not laughing at you, little one (seriously?! Riv almost screamed - now it's using quotes out of Eragon! WHAT?!), I'm laughing at those funny tries when you should've just remembered I'm half made out of fire. Following that, there came a picture of a wink. Then the little dragon jumped towards the built-up fire, flicked its tail towards it, and seconds later happy, albeit green-blue, flames were licking up and down the wood.  
  
Riv huffed again, defeated. She knew the hatchling was right. She shouldn't have been so stupid to forget, but she figured it might have had something to do with the fact that she'd always wanted to try that moss-and-stick trick, and that she really wanted to prove to herself she could actually do something. Knowing things about electricity wouldn't bring her much in this place.

Doves shook her head when she finally gave up trying to fish. Her egg was laughing at her. Sighing, she turned and took the line off her makeshift pole, then noticed Riv trying to get a fire started with… only moss and a stick? Where'd she learn that? She needs a bone dry back plank with an indentation in it as well, she thought to herself. She watched Skully, though. It looked like it was laughing at Riv, and then it started a fire. Doves just watched, slightly dumbfounded, with her bag and egg on her criss-crossed lap.

Riku looked up and smiled and then his eyes closed. He relaxed completely.

"So... um..." Shace shook her head, trying to clear it from its exhausted fog, "What's your name? I'm Shace, and the little one here doesn't have a name yet."

The hatchling sniffed about Riku's feet before climbing back up onto Shace's shoulders and nearly causing her to fall over due to the sudden shift in balance, combined with her general exhaustion.

"I’m Riku..." He smiled and sat up. The hood of his vest was still up, hiding his double-colored hair of black and white. His eyes looked almost silver due to how icy blue they were. He pulled out his egg to reveal that it was black and white, but with stripes. He had on black combat boots and worn jeans. His black shirt tumbled from his seemingly endless bag. He searched his bag for anything to make into food. He threw out note books, pieces of leather, feathers, sticks, a hunting knife… Then he pulled out an apple and began eating, offering one to Shace.

"Awesome, thanks! I skipped breakfast this morning, so I am starving! And I love apples!" Shace happily took the apple, biting into it eagerly.

She had to acknowledge that Riku was attractive, for a guy. Shame she had a girlfriend back home she missed quite a lot, now that she thought of her...

The hatchling made several chirping noises watching Shace eat. "Oh, you're probably hungry too, aren't you? Well, we'd better go get you some food, ‘cause I know you don't like fruit. See ya, Riku!" She scarfed down the rest of her apple and dashed off for the exit.

Riku waved as she left and sat Indian style, placing his egg in his lap. He yawned and waited for any of the others to return. However, it was not long before he got a coughing fit from a dry throat. He pulled out a water bottle and drank before nodding off in a sitting position. His hood fell over his face as he napped.

The fish was starting to actually smell good. Riv sniffed the air and felt her stomach growl. Skully was nearby, tearing off one fish head after another. For such a small creature, it sure did eat a lot, though it did leave the best parts for its partner (Riv was reluctant to say owner since she didn't really feel like dragons could be "owned").

It had been easy enough to gut the fish once Skully's small but sharp claws had neatly torn the bellies open. Riv had, in the meanwhile, found a flat enough stone that could be used as a pan and there they were, cooking the fish. She poked it around with a stick long enough for it to turn around, more or less, and tore off a little piece to try if it was already through. It tasted quite bland, but that was to be expected for having absolutely nothing to spice it with, not even salt.

Doves scooted over to where Riv was, pulling a couple salt packets out of her bag. "Salt for some fish? ‘Cuz my fishing experiment failed," the egg read. She tapped her thighs nervously, totally unsure of herself in this social situation. Her dragon-to-be tried calming her by throwing mental images of a dragon attack with a pointer to the dragon saying 'I'll do that!' Doves ended up laughing mentally instead.

Riku stood, but then felt dizzy afterwards. He stumbled outside and made his way to his sister, falling halfway there. He got up and continued, his egg in his bag at his side. He still only had his vest covering his torso. He also saw Riv and decided to sit next to her. He pulled out some homemade food from his seemingly endless bag, but then his dragon-to-be nudged him mentally, knowing he was dizzy and such. He smirked: little late for that, little one. Riku then chuckled softly before pulling three folded fishing poles from his bag. He set the other two down before using the third.

Doves watched her brother in shock. He does pack everything with him... Her egg gave a mental nod of confirmation. She noticed, though, that he was obviously dizzy. She got up, leaving the egg and her bag where she had been sitting. Walking over to him, she took the pole from his hands and pointed to the ground, her point clear. She was so tempted at that moment to knock him unconscious and make him rest, but she knew she'd be the one with a sore hand and he'd still be sitting there. Little brother, you really should just sit back and relax! she grumbled mentally. Of course, her egg sent it onto his egg, which sent it onto Riku. Oy vey...

Avalon finished looking at the displays (after looking in awe at several amazing pieces) and went upstairs. There were even more things up here. There was an entire section just on crowns and tiaras. All of them were drastically different from one another, possibly reflecting the owners' personal tastes. But who had they belonged to, that they had let Reginald take them? It's not like this place was a functioning museum - there were no people, and besides, someone could just walk up and take anything. There were no cases. She passed a peculiar deep green flower, in the midst of the tiara section, but it certainly didn't look like a tiara. Vuelie jumped up onto the display, and Avalon looked at her incredulously. That was a jump of about three and a half feet. What was Vuelie, some sort of cat? Then Avalon noticed tiny nubs on Vuelie's shoulders. Wing stubs! Avalon grinned proudly. They definitely weren't big enough to fly with, but enough to get airborne for a big jump. She sent a quiet congratulations to Vuelie, who shook herself off proudly and sent a hazy image of two big, graceful dragons flying through the air. She would be a big dragon soon, just like those two. Avalon noted, surprised, that the dragons, despite being very similar, were two completely different colors. Was one an alt? Maybe. Meanwhile, Vuelie had picked up the flower in her mouth and scurried off with it down the stairs. "Vuelie!" Avalon called, and ran after her. Who knew her dragon could behave so mischievously?

Riku chuckled again. "Little sister... must you always call me little brother?" He lay back and relaxed. He realized just how sore he was and noted he should take it easy for a while until the soreness went away. He let the dizziness pass and looked up at his little sister with a slight smile. He knew she may be small, semi-deaf and mute, but she could get her point across.

Riv had just nodded happily to Doves, more than ready to trade some fish for salt - after all, Skully had caught more fish than she could eat in a week - and had started furiously salting the almost-done first fish and the still-raw ones that were lying beside her, waiting to be cooked, when Riku showed up out of nowhere and almost made her jump. He then decided to sit right next to her, which made her even more nervous and she accidentally spilt some salt onto the fire instead of the fish. Cursing herself, she made mental cringes and tried to smile like nothing had happened on the outside. Skully snickered inside her head.

Shut up, you, Riv thought. He turned towards the now-sated hatchling who was lounging like... well, seriously. Like the most comfy cat she had ever seen, right beside the fire on a bigger stone that Riv hadn’t needed. It seemed to even purr, which was so strange, but at the same time quite comforting.

When Doves stood up and went to Riku, who still looked quite fatigued, the older girl got concerned. He hadn't slept all too long, and who knew how much rest he'd gotten with those nightmares. She quickly checked the fish, and noticing it was good enough to eat, she turned towards Riku and Doves who were seemingly having a mental conversation, strange as it was.

"Hey guys, do you maybe happen to have a plate or something to eat the fish from in those bottomless bags of yours? And Riku, this first one's for you, you look like you need to eat something. Or rather a lot of something. Thank god Skully's such a good fisher," Riv finished with a big smile.

Riku smiled - the dizziness was gone. He sat up and searched around in that bag of his, pulling out some plates and setting them down. Then he chose one for his plate and accepted the offer of fish. "Thank you... mind if I add to our little feast?" he asked openly, hoping for an answer since he wanted to get rid of the apples that were making his bag heavier than it should have been. He began to eat, realizing just how hungry he was. He enjoyed the taste and relaxed a bit. The hood of his jacket fell back, revealing his black and white hair.

Avalon was still chasing Vuelie, trying hard not to run full-force into any of the pedestals on the bottom floor. Avalon tried to tell Vuelie to stop, but got a firm negative every time. There was no mischief in her "voice," though. Whatever Vuelie was doing, she was convinced she ought to be doing it. Avalon had no choice but to stumble along behind as Vuelie scampered nimbly around the museum displays and into the halls of the hatchery.

After a while, Avalon had to slow to a jog. She was much more out of shape than she had been during her time in P.E. And besides, she was undernourished anyway. Vuelie slowed down, too, so apparently she wasn't in a hurry - she just didn't want to be caught. Finally, they reached the outdoors. Vuelie skipped lightly over the grass to where Riv, Doves, and her brother were eating. Finally, Vuelie stopped. Avalon slowed and watched curiously as Vuelie walked into the middle of the group. She dropped the peculiar green, long-stemmed flower at Riv's feet and did what could only be described as a bow, before nodding proudly to Skully and padding off contentedly toward Avalon. All Avalon could do was raise her hands in an I-had-nothing-to-do-with-this gesture before sitting down on the grass and replenishing her energy. Meanwhile, she was just about bombarding Vuelie with thoughts, but her hatchling didn't reply immediately, or clearly. All Avalon got in return was a mental shrug. Wonderful.

Riku looked up at Avalon and offered an apple, smiling. He then got a mental nudge by his egg, which he looked at and tilted his head. He grinned as he realized that the dragon inside was excited to see the world outside.

Doves shook her head at her brother, then sat down and picked up a plate. Her egg had rocked gently, but all she noticed was a mental shove from the egg with an image-based question. You eating? She laughed mentally. Fish, little one, I’m going to eat fish, Doves replied with a mental image of the fish before it was cooked.

Doves watched as Vuelie dropped what looked to be some sort of flower in front of Riv. She wondered what it was, but didn't say anything as she pondered the world around her.

Avalon gratefully accepted the apple from Doves' brother and sat down with the others as she started eating. Vuelie simply came up and sat down on her lap. Since Vuelie seemed to be completely oblivious to Avalon's confusion, she just sighed and looked up at the others, deciding it was finally time to introduce herself in between bites. "Hi, guys," she said. "I'm sorry I haven't even gotten a chance to talk to you yet. My name is Avalon. What are your names?" She directed the last question to both Doves and her brother, out of politeness, although she had already picked up on Doves' name earlier.

Riku moved the black and white hair from his icy eyes. "I’m Riku, it’s very nice to meet you." He smiled as he got images from his egg.

Invi was browsing the weapons section when she found a set covered with a golden sheet. Looking up the row, all of the sets were covered with sheets of all sorts of colours. To each of the weapon sets, a note was attached. The one in front of her read 'For the new riders: Painted Thornback.' Invi checked the next note fixed to a light blue sheet. This one read 'For Vuelie and rider'. Whatever was under it must be Avalon's. Turning back, she found the writing had changed. 'For Terridor and rider'. She shivered at the fact the note had noticed her presence and changed itself accordingly. Freaky. Invi pulled the intricately-made pin off of the note and inspected it. It portrayed a symbol vaguely resembling a biohazard symbol that you see in hospital bins and the like. She knew the reason for this was the fact that Painted Thornbacks were deadly poisonous, but she shivered a second time, as she had a horrible fear of all things both sharp and medicine-related.

Invi fixed the pin to her long coat and continued to pull off the sheet. She observed the vast amount of things such as throwing knives and hidden blades. She always was pretty sneaky, so this sort of stuff suited her fine. She had picked up a giant two handed sword from the back of the set when she heard Avalon yell. Panicked, she followed Avalon through some hallways, carrying her sword until they reached outside. Avalon was talking to the new people when Invi walked up behind them and said, "I have something to show you." Invi glanced up at Doves and Icy Eyes Mc'Only-boy (who she had forgotten the name of). " I have something to show all of you."

Shace had been out with her hatchling, hunting insects when they saw Invi run by, sword in hand. Intrigued, the pair followed her to the rest of the group.

Doves blinked when her egg mentally shoved her again, but this time with a picture of Avalon and a question mark. She reached around and picked up her egg, then looked back at Avalon. "I'm Doves," she replied via egg to Avalon. She ate a bit more before she felt the heavy steps of someone running. Looking up she saw Invi come at them with a sword in hand, though by Invi's face it was clear that she had noticed something that had excited her. Doves took a minute to comprehend what Invi said, for the gal was speaking so fast that Doves couldn't feel it and had to rely on her egg to translate. She perked up, though, when she realized what Invi said.

Riv was still extremely confused by the green-stemmed flower set at her feet by the little Vuelie, and even more so because of that strange bow it had made. She had tried getting some answers out of the lazy Phoenix, but it was simply grinning at her and sending her shrugging pictures. That good-for-nothing lazy little... Oh well. Avalon looked just as confused as she was, so she figured it was some kind of a dragon secret that hopefully Reginald, wherever he was, could explain.

She was just setting another fish to cook, salting it heartily and putting a few slices of apple in between (she figured she would try it out, maybe it would give an interesting taste) when she felt the earth shudder slightly underneath her and she looked up just in time to see Invi skid to a halt beside them, with a dangerous-looking sword in hand. Where was the sheath? Dear lord, gal, you don't just run around with a naked sword in hand, Riv thought, frowning. What if you stumble, or someone suddenly steps in your way? Learn your sword handling. She finished her thought sternly just in time to hear the other girl say: "I have something to show all of you."

Skully sat up as soon as the words had left her mouth, and looked excitedly at Riv. Apparently it knew something she didn't, again. She looked at her hatchling, and then frowned again. There was something slightly different about it. The flames were just that bit bigger, it seemed to her, and it seemed to her that the agile cat body had acquired two strange small bumps, just above the shoulder blades of its forefeet. And then she almost squealed out loud when she realized what they were - wing bumps! They were wing bumps! Skully was actually growing, and pretty fast at that. She would never have thought it would get wing bumps just one day after hatching, but to be fair - this was Mistland, and even all her fantasy books on dragons couldn't help her all the way.

Skully shared her excitement about the wing beginnings. It clearly couldn't wait to fly, just like Riv. She hoped Skully would be big enough for her to mount, because she really didn't want to miss the flying part.

But then her thoughts turned back to the present and she figured that if they were going to go see whatever Invi wanted to show them, she'd better pack up the fish somehow. If only she'd had a backpack with her when that blasted dragon rider had shown up, but no. She was glad she'd even had normal clothes on and had just finished combing her hair and doing her light make-up. Ugh, it was a pain having nothing but your clothes and a dragon. Maybe the hatchery would have some stuff for her to wear and maybe a toothbrush? Would be nice...

Riku jolted a little and stood, facing the one who approached with a tilted head. He suddenly jumped to a protective stance between the person, Doves and Riv. He was a nice guy, but he didn’t like the way the sword looked. His icy eyes remained fixed on it.

When he was younger, he would always play a sword fighting game with other boys in the town, but he could remember the wound he received by a glass sword one of the other boys had brought. He still had the thin scar going down his chest.

By now, Riku was nearly growling, but something kept telling him to calm down. He just watched quietly.

Avalon looked up curiously at Invi. She then stared at the sword. "Wait," she said, "you actually TOOK something? Invi, that's a museum! Or at least I assume so..." she continued. She noticed all the other trappings invi had brought: knives, all sorts of things. She sighed, but then her hatchling got up and walked over to invi, issuing a small call. Apparently she wanted Avalon to follow them. "Well, I'll come, I guess," said Avalon. "What is it?"

Riv noticed Riku's jolt and the protective stance. Typical, the only male here trying to protect the girls. She scoffed inside her mind, more than ready to protect herself when it came to it. Plus, she had Skully with its awesome flames. Riku still only had an egg.

But when Vuelie walked up to Invi and apparently called to Avalon, she relaxed a bit again. If the dragon thought there was no harm from Invi coming, Riv figured it should be safe. Just then she noticed all the other gadgets Invi had carried out with herself. Throwing knives, daggers, sharp blades... at least those were sheathed. Where in the world did she get all that stuff? Riv would've loved a bow and a few hidden blades for herself. At least that would help immensely with the hunting and such.

Doves laughed at her brother. You better calm down - she's friend, not foe, you dork, she sent to him over dragon telepathy. She stood up, but almost lost her egg in the process when it rocked really hard. Her eyes widened slightly, but she picked up her paper plate and put it in the fire to burn, then collected her pole and bag. Doves took a breath and tried something in a way of communication that she hadn't thought of before. Little one, can you send a message to the other dragons and have them give it to their person? In response her egg gave her a mental shrug with the feeling of trying. Thank you, she thought before configuring the message so hopefully the other dragons and eggs would get it. "Shall we go, friends, and find out the mysteries that await us?" she asked.

Riku calmed down a bit, the scar slightly visible from under his vest. He was still on edge despite the dragons; he shook his head as if in pain or trying to shake the memory away. He sighed softly and held his head. "Why can’t I forget that... and the fire... why?" he whispered to himself, picking up his bag.

Invi lead the group back to the museum and up the flight of stairs. She gestured to the sheet-covered sets of weapons and armor that awaited the others. Just looking at the rainbow of armor and weapons down below on the bottom floor make her slightly excited to see what the others would get. "These are all for us, you know. I found one with my dragon’s name written on it." Invi pointed to a set at the far end. "Avalon, yours is next to mine, it says 'For the new riders: Vuelie and rider.'" She bent down and scratched Vuelie lightly on the back of the head. She assumed this was OK, as many of the hatchlings, no matter how sentient, often acted like cats.

Riv finished putting out the fire as Doves and Riku were gathering up their stuff. Then Doves's message came through, in an unusual way - through Skully. But she figured it would be just as good as reading the egg, if not better. Faster, definitely, than reading the scrolling text. She'd always actually quite detested those scrolling news banners on TV - she couldn't concentrate on anything else whilst reading them. But this way, Doves' hatchling-in-egg could simply transfer her thoughts to the other dragons and they would give it on to the humans as a whole message.

Just then, Invi, seeing everyone ready, started to move towards the hatchery. They entered it and went past the rooms Riv had already seen. Invi was leading them, with Avalon beside her. It looked like she knew where she was going since she didn't need to look at Invi to see where she was leading the rest of them. She figured that the lovely green flower Vuelie had brought her (which she was now wearing around her arm, since its long stem seemed to bend nicely and stay in form - as if there were a copper wire inside it, but there obviously wasn't), had come from the same place as Invi's sword and gadgets. She couldn't wait to see what else there was.

After a while they came to a large double door, which was ajar. Invi led them all inside. The group “ooh”ed and “aah”ed and lots of gasps were heard. It was amazing. Riv couldn't find another adjective to describe the huge room that was unveiling before their eyes. There were rows and rows of all kinds of armor, from lightweight bracers to heavy iron chest plates. The armor came in all sizes and shapes, and... WOW! There was even dragon armor! It all looked ridiculously expensive as well, even the old leather pieces that had been kept in best shape.

But there wasn't just armor. As far as she could see, there was anything you could ever imagine stored in here, built up like a museum-library, but without glass cases or huge bookshelves. There were books which she couldn't wait to study closer, lying right there on the table, some open, some closed.

Stepping further into the room, Invi led the group to a staircase which led to an upper level. They passed the armor and saw rows upon rows of swords, knives, daggers and other pointy, sharp things. Riv was absolutely fascinated by all of that. She would've gladly spent days here, just to see everything down to the last detail. And then, just before they started up the stairs, she glimpsed the bow section further away.

She almost left the group and ran to the bows. Almost. But Skully strongly reminded her to stay with the group. What Invi wanted to show them was apparently more important. Still, she couldn't tear her eyes off the beauties, not until they disappeared from her view as the staircase spiraled upwards. They eventually reached the upper level and Invi waved her hand towards a long row of something covered with colorful sheets. She explained how she had found a set of weaponry and armor for her and Terry with the dragon's name on it, and how there seemed to be one for everyone, even those who had not yet made it to Mistland.

And that's where Riv stopped listening and started frantically searching for hers and Skully's. She had so many ideas of what could be underneath theirs, and many of them sounded way too fantastic even to herself, but she had seen what lay downstairs. Maybe...

She slowly advanced down the row, carefully reading all the signs, though she didn't pay too much attention to the sheet colors that didn't... speak to her. Black, green or blue, however, were good signs, so she was especially careful around them. Finally, quite close to where Invi's and Avalon's sets (who had in the meanwhile gotten there before her) were, she came upon a strange sheet. The other ones were usually monochrome, colored with just one color. There were a few that had two colors upon them, but those had clear shapes and were perfectly lined. This one, however, had green, blue and black on it. The black seemed to be the main color, but the green and blue were covering it almost completely, though they seemed a bit faded. They also kind of seemed to fade into the black, so there were no clear lines on where one color started and where the other ended. The effect it conjured up was literally awesome. It was as if there were actual moving flames of green and blue on the black sheet, and with every movement, they shifted slightly so the illusion was perfect.

She knew instantly that was her set. She didn't even have to look at the sign to know, but she checked just to be sure. It read: "For the new riders: "Skully” and rider.” From the way Skully was written, Riv found it extremely fascinating that whoever had written these knew it wouldn't be her hatchling's final name. Italics AND quote marks? Nice.

She grabbed the sheet, slightly hesitant. She didn't know what she would find underneath, and she was slightly anxious. What if it was nothing like she had imagined at all? But Skully, impatient enough from her slowness, trotted forward, grabbed a bunch of the precious fabric into its mouth, and tugged fiercely. It was small, but determined. With help from Riv they finally got the sheet off. And her mouth fell open.

She stood there, transfixed. There was no glitter or glamour here, except for a few small trinkets. It looked lethal, deadly, and so wonderfully beautiful. She was afraid to touch the things, lest they disappear into nothingness beneath her fingers. So she let her eyes scan the fortune she'd stumbled upon. There were tens of throwing knives in all sizes, with handles smooth and black as night itself. A sword hung upon a rack behind other things, long, but thin, and she figured not all too heavy for her to use. Its handle was made out of a dark metal that gleamed deep blue, and it had an emerald fixed into its pommel. Its scabbard was made of black leather, with intricate dark green designs covering it. Some blue hieroglyphs were also adorning it, and she made a mental note to ask Reginald, if he ever showed up again, what they meant.

Where there was a sword (clearly a one-hander), there needed to be a shield. And, right beside the rack, there that was as well. Again dark wood (she wasn't sure if it was ebony, she'd never paid too much attention on wood and their colors), strengthened with black leather and metal ribbons, complete with a dark green metal on the edge. It looked not only as if it could nicely defend her from most of blows, but could also be used for offensive techniques pretty well. At least the edge and pointy ends of the slightly flame-shaped shield looked sharp enough.

There was a pair of daggers, three pointed blades thrusting out sinisterly, laying on the small table in the middle. They were the exact copy of Riv's favorite sai daggers, ever since she'd been a small kid and seen Elektra fight with those. The blades gleamed silver, while the handle was, again, polished black leather, though it ended with more silver and two tiny emeralds encrusted within. She couldn't wait to try out a few moves with those – carefully at first, of course.

But the main item of the set drew her attention the most. It was the most beautiful bow she'd ever seen. It wasn't like the highly-modern bow that Katniss used in the arena and training. It also wasn't just some wooden bow. It looked like it had been made by elves, literally. Dark wood elves, yes, but elves nonetheless. Even though it was completely black with only dark green flames running over it, almost impossible to see because of how dark the green color was, it still seemed to be slightly glowing with an inner light of its own. The bow had a long, natural-feeling curve, with both ends turned back outside smoothly, pulling the line between them taut. The tips looked sharp enough to pierce the skin, so that was a point for the offensive. It looked absolutely breathtaking, but at the same time completely deadly.

The quiver was standing right beside the bow. Covered with the same intricate designs as the sword scabbard, and with a few extra flames of blue, it looked pretty enough to wear to a ball. Out of it were sticking a few dozen arrows. Again, black. She hadn't hoped for that much beautiful ebony-ness, but she was glad it was black. Riv hated white, and found comfort in darker colors, though not darker as in creepier, but darker as in deeper and more sensual. She had nothing against light, pastel colors, especially when picking a color for the walls in their house or such, but since this was Mistland, and this was her adventure, finally, just for her own, she wanted everything to be like she'd always imagined in her head whilst reading fantasy books. And now, her dreams had really come true. She was in the land of dragons, with a full set of weapons and armor, exactly to her liking, down to the last detail, with her most favorite colors, which also matched her hatchling. She was literally in ecstasy.

Riku walked over to a katana that had his name on it. He gently lifted it and found it to be light. He unsheathed it. The blade was black with white stripes, similar to his egg, which nudged him mentally. It sent him an image of a black dragon with white skull markings and stripes as if to say, 'This is me, this is me.' He chuckled and looked at the other items near his name.

He felt a little different, seeing the armor and the knives, more bags, and other objects, all still with the same black and white markings. He smiled a little, then sat down, looking at his katana. Like the one he always wanted but never got, like a penniless kid in a candy shop. All the same, he had learned how to use one. Everything flooded back to him and he felt better – like he was meant to be there, even with all of the girls (since he was the only boy around at the moment).

Doves followed the others right behind her brother, and looked on in awe of the amount items flowing around the rooms as they walked by. Oh, my little one, so many... She didn't finish the sentence because of the incredible variety of the items, and because her egg was mentally dragging her to a spot next to Riv's. As she stood there, she watched in shock as the once black sheet changed into a pattern familiar to her; it looked like a blanket she had as a child, and lost to the fire. The egg wobbled in joy.

How, how did it know? Doves asked herself, running her hand over the cloth before attempting to move it. EAK! She felt a slice through her head, making her flinch, seeming to warn her, yet beg her to wait. Okay, okay, I'll wait to you hatch, Little One, before I pull this sheet. But how did the pattern get here? All she got in answer to her question was a shrug. Cradling her egg, Doves read the tag attached to the sheet. "For 'Little One' and Partner; be careful when using these items, they can be helpful as well as harmful. Weapon of choice: The Mystery Staff." 'The Mystery Staff' was written in dragon language and had Doves wondering what it meant until her egg merged with her, and together they translated it. At that point, Doves got lost in teaching her egg what she could about English while her egg taught her the dragon language.

Riv only partly noticed Doves come up beside her, and watched with a sort of a detached curiosity as the once-black sheet turned into something she could only name as a blanket. It had a pattern on it, and really resembled those blankies that little kids have and carry around everywhere, just that it was much bigger. She was also mildly interested in why Doves hesitated and then decided not to remove the sheet at all. She would've liked to see what was underneath, but Skully sent her an explanation. The Mystery dragon wanted to hatch first to see everything with its own eyes.

Speaking of Skully, that little up-to-no-good misfit was currently sniffing around the sharp blades of the sai daggers, close enough to accidentally cut itself. Riv grabbed it, and, despite its protesting squeaks and increased burning intensity, secured it on her shoulder where she could keep watch on it. No need for anyone to get hurt. Skully skulked for a little bit, but then decided that it'd see everything even better from its high vantage point and settled down, watching Riv's every move closely.

The dark-haired girl had finally managed to drag her eyes away from the amazing bow - HER amazing bow, she realized - and had mustered up enough courage to actually touch it. It didn't disappear, so she took that as a good sign. The wood was just as she had imagined it - sleek, shiny and slightly cold to the touch, but, interestingly enough, gave her the same burning feeling that Skully did. It would fit her and the dragon perfectly.

She'd inspected every last inch of the curved wood and the strong but bendy string. She appreciated the way the bow's handle part fit perfectly into her hand, like it had been carved especially for her. Well, it kind of had been, she figured, but how, she didn't bother to think about too much. Probably magic of some kind. It definitely looked more and more elven-made as she went over it. No scratches whatsoever; the silky-looking wood was absolutely unblemished. It had been honed long enough for it to have a slight dark sheen which just contributed to the overall shine that was coming off the bow. The flames also seemed to move, just like with the blanket. The only difference with the blanket was that the flames were dark green, just like she wished. The rest of the stuff was both herself and Skully put together, but the bow - that was just for her.

She felt tears spring into her eyes whilst she regarded the perfect gift affectionately. She'd never had anything this perfect given to her. Yes, her life had been better than for some, and worse than for a lot of others, but she'd always been content enough. Still, there had been that little nagging voice in her head wishing for awesome stuff just like was laying before her now, wishing she'd have enough money to actually buy this stuff, or to take lessons on how to handle one of them. And now, there she was sitting, with a hatchling dragon on her shoulder, and the perfect weapons and armor laid before her. A freaking dragon. Knives. Swords. Bows. Armor. She had never, not even in her wildest dreams, actually believed she could one day, for real, touch such things, let alone call them her own. It was all just too overwhelming and the blue-eyed girl had to take a deep, shuddering breath to calm herself. She didn't want to burst into tears (of joy and happiness, and also slight sadness that no one she cared about or loved could see her dream come true) in front of the others.

Seeing as everyone else was enjoying themselves, Invi decided to inspect her own pile closer. Something she had noticed was the distinct lack of bright gold. Her hatchling, although not having many gold markings, still had them, and they were as bright as day. Only a few knives and daggers had the shimmering color; most were silver. Inspecting her sword, she found it only had one sharp edge. The other was smooth, with a jagged, saw-like section in the middle. She figured that the sword was large and heavy enough to cause major damage regardless of its sharpness, although she did kind of wonder what the saw section was for...

The sword, unlike everything else, was a kind of rusty color, and had a feeling of age to it. Running down the sword, on both sides, was a long strip of what looked like ruby. The ruby shifted and the small swirls seen in it continuously changed and faded. Terry started to yip, and tried to climb up on to Invi's sword, but she picked him up and put him back on the floor. This is when she noticed some Victorian looking dude watching her from the other end of the hall. She lifted an eyebrow and said, "If you’re trying to be British, you’re about a century out, mate."

Shace also followed the crew, staring in awe at the museum-esque section of the hatchery, and as soon as they reached the section for the new riders, she, like Riv, was eager to find her own display. She was also admittedly curious about what her display would call her dragon, who she idly scratched under the chin as she looked at the displays.

She paused for a bit when Riv unveiled hers, admittedly staring at her sword, though the bow also caught her eye and distracted her until her hatchling nipped her ear impatiently, reminding her what she was supposed to be doing. She moved a few displays past Riv's before she found hers, covered in a red silk sheet with Futhark runes along the trimming in alternating silver and gold, "For X and rider." She grabbed the sheet pulling it away to reveal, not a weapon, but a silver shield, a black saddle and some red-dyed leather armor.

She investigated the shield first; it was a simple silver heater shield with more Futhark runes surrounding the edges inscribed in gold. The next thing she inspected was the simple leather armour. At least at first glance, it had appeared to be colored leather, but it was in fact actually some kind of red dragon-hide – at least that's what she could only assume, based on the look and texture of the material. The saddle, however, was a thing of great beauty, intricate in its design and also inscribed in runes of silver, with many saddlebags that she was just about to inspect before Invi acknowledged that strange man and distracted her again.

Avalon walked back willingly to the museum, assuming that's where they were going. She was correct - they followed the same path back to the huge museum. She heard a couple of gasps as they entered. She agreed that it was impressive. The room was huge, and the shimmering arched walls only added to the effect. She followed Invi up a flight of spiral stairs as Vuelie padded on ahead with Terry and Invi. Then she felt a little mental nudge as Vuelie sent her a message from Doves. Huh, she thought. The dragons can communicate telepathically with each other? Cool. She continued up the stairs. When she got to the top, she saw several displays, but all covered with cloths, mostly black. They were the first seemingly protected things she'd seen in the whole museum. She wondered what they were for, until she heard Invi's explanation. "Ohhhhh..." she said quietly. Then she ran around to look for hers. There were certainly tons of displays here, all identical, except for a couple that she assumed were for the others. The cloths changed color as they walked near them. She blinked in astonishment. It was the first magic she'd seen without knowing who was controlling it. It was different, somehow, seeing objects just change color like that without knowing why or how. She noted as she walked past an empty display that it must be Invi's. She squinted at the plaque. Yup, there it was, “For Terridor and rider.” There was that word "rider" again. Was it different for people who chose pygmies? she wondered. They would be difficult to ride, she laughed to herself. Then, as she passed a cloth-covered display a few paces from everyone else's, she caught movement out of the corner of her eye as the material transformed - not just in color, but in fabric, as well. She whipped around as the plain, black velvet became light blue, almost white, and shimmery. She picked up a corner and felt it. It wasn't thick, like leather, or slippery, like silk, but somewhere in between. Vuelie jumped up and down excitedly, sending mental pictures in a blur. Avalon carefully pulled the fabric off - it might be useful later. Then she forgot all about it and dropped it, nearly covering Vuelie before the hatchling scampered out of the way and leaped, cat-like, up onto Avalon's display.

Unlike what Avalon had seen on Invi’s person, there wasn't too much here, but what was there was astonishing. First, she picked up the closest item - a long, thin, sword in a sheath, with a dark blue handle. The sheath itself was the same royal blue color, intricately patterned with swirls: the type she usually drew, she realized with a small jolt, but infinitely better-drawn. As she passed her hand over the sheath, she noticed something weird - If she blocked out the main light filtering in through the window, the sheath became effectively as black as night. It was like there was no light reflecting off of anything else in the room. She pulled the blade partway out of its sheath. It wasn't patterned, unlike its sheath. It was plain, bright, and silvery-colored (she didn't know her metals very well, but it was probably steel or something, she thought), with a single jewel inlaid near its base. The gem changed color depending on the angle you looked at it from, which was pretty. She wasn't sure if it had any other function, though. She put down the sword to let Vuelie circle around it several times and paw it before finally settling down to stare intently at the handle, which was curved perfectly to Avalon's left hand.

The next items Avalon looked at were two odd-shaped weapons. Each was plain silver, and mostly dulled and rounded except for two hooked points at each end. The weapons themselves made a circular shape when put together. She still didn't know what they were, though. She picked them up. Each handle was lined with the same pale blue material as the display cover, oddly enough, but wrapped around several times so it stayed firmly in place. She tentatively rotated her wrists around and half-lunged forward with one. They were pretty comfortable to use. What WERE they, though? Vuelie knew. She sent a few pictures (clearer than they used to be) of deer grazing, then of two bucks fighting, their antlers clashing ferociously. The last image was of a blizzard-swept mountain with a small hut on top that looked very much like it was from some region of eastern Asia, though Avalon wasn't sure quite where. It only took a second for her to put two and two together. She knew what these were! She recalled a conversation she had had with one of her sensei, back on Earth. He had mentioned that there were hundreds of Shaolin animals, not just 5, and that each had a different form or weapon. When she had told him that the deer was her favorite animal, he had informed her that there were such a thing as antler blades, an ancient weapon used by warriors from... well, either China or Japan. Her dojo kind of mixed the two styles. Since then, she had often pestered her two sensei to learn a form with them so they could teach her, but they never had, of course. The weapon itself was rather obscure, and they had tons of other things to do. Well, now she had them. These were antler blades, deer horn knives - her own. And she would have to learn how to use them herself. She stared at them in her hands for a few moments as memories swirled around through her head, along with some positive and negative emotions. Then she slowly put them down and looked at the rest of her equipment.

The last large thing there was her bow. Ever since she had heard about this, she knew she would have one. It was amazing. It was fairly plain, and the shape wasn't unlike her own at home, but it was vastly different. First of all, the part that was usually wood was made of the same unyielding, lightweight material as the sword sheath. It was that shiny dark blue that turned black under a shadow and shone in the light like a jewel. It felt like wood, though, polished wood. It was peculiar. The bowstring was wound silver, in what looked like a minute, even braid, like a cord of rope. The string was smooth and polished. The handhold was gold (a new shade so far, like Vuelie's egg), and matched her right hand’s grip perfectly. She had to stop herself from making that squee sound she always did when excited. It was hard enough to find a left-handed bow, and this one was better than, well, ANYTHING! Vuelie did it for her, bouncing around like a gas molecule and chirping like crazy. Avalon grinned watching her hatchling. She was about to put the bow down when she noticed a few elegantly carved runes on the grip. She turned it around and looked at them. Definitely unreadable, but they reminded her of the writing on the rings in the Lord of the Rings trilogy. She had to remind herself that that language was fake, and this one obviously wasn't. She set it down next to the blades and the sword and leaned over the empty space to grab her quiver.

It, not surprisingly, was yet again the light blue material. Unlike her cheap one at home, the seams were neatly turned in and thin strips of fabric separated little compartments or each arrow. She counted them quickly. There were twelve arrows, her favorite number. That made it seem all the more surreal. The arrows, she saw as she pulled one out, were made of the weird blue wood as well. The fletching, she noted contentedly, was made of a thin, delicate type of leaf, not feathers. Although that might mess up accuracy a tiny bit, it wouldn't separate as easily as feather fluff, and besides, it was animal-friendly. These arrows would not be used to shoot living things, if she could help it. Though why else would she need them? she thought with a shudder. She pushed that thought away, even while looking at the arrows' deadly sharp points. She slid them back into their sheaths and went to look at the next item.

Riku looked at his egg as he felt it suddenly move. His eyes widened as he saw cracks forming on the striped surface. He watched the egg as more and more cracks formed. A big grin crossed his face as the shell began to split and he saw the white head of the hatchling. It easily managed to escape its egg prison. "Aren’t you a small one." He studied its dark coloration and the contrasts of the white and black body. He picked it up. "But what should I name you... hmmmm…"

The Nemesis hatchling crawled up his arm and perched on his shoulder, its tail on the opposite one. It climbed up into his black and white hair, putting its head on the black and body on the white part. It then looked at everyone else, giving a soft and sleepy hiss before falling asleep on his head. He gave a soft chuckle. "After all that, I bet you’re tired, but... you remind me of... hmmm, I’ll call you Grey for now." He removed the sleeping hatchling from his head and carried it in his arms. He then looked at his items again, his eyes falling on his favorite item, the katana.

He gently placed Grey on his back to rest as he looked at his things. The katana, he just noticed, had a white blade edge going up the blade, making it seem sharper. It had a white gem design in the base of the black handle which formed a spiral. He tested the blade a little, using a Kata he had choreographed a long time ago. The blade seem to be light and quick as he moved, and he made it seem easy to those who had never seen a katana Kata. He sheathed the blade in one motion. He was quite happy with the result. Also on the table was something almost like a robe or a jacket. The top was as black as Grey's scales, with brilliant white stripes. He had always wanted something like that. The multiple layers on the inside became lighter and the innermost layer was as brilliant white as the stripes on the top layer... he realized it wasn't a jacket, but a kimono. He looked around to see if anyone else got something similar or if it was all unique for everyone. He touched the fabric, feeling that it was made of pure silk, but better than on Earth. This kimono would be light enough to have on all the time, cool enough when the sun was beating down and warm enough to be used as a blanket. He set the kimono back down, then looked at the two daggers, both of which were like the katana but with more of an edge on them, as well as being small enough to be easily concealed in the kimono. He picked up both of them, realizing they both fit his grip amazingly well. He was really like a kid in a candy shop now.

Doves came back around to noticing everyone when her egg chirped in her mind, and then the wobbling and cracking began. It got more and more difficult for Doves to hold onto her egg, so she sat down and placed it in her lap. Not five minutes later, a long little creature broke the shell and started pushing its way out. Doves helped it out by cracking more of the egg.

There stood on the egg, a, well, large, in respect to lizards, little dragon (about the length of her arm), though it couldn't seem to decide what color to settle on, for it faded back and forth from black to white and every color in between. It chirped happily and hopped onto Dove's shoulder, but then it got tangled up in her hair, to both the human's and dragon's frustration. Little one! She thought to her dragon while giggling mentally. Then her dragon started rapid firing images of the blanket. I want you out of my hair first!Doves got a firm No, I'm working on it, in reply. So Doves got up and set the egg shell and bag on the floor, then looked down at the cloth covering many items. Just as she was about to pull off the sheet, her dragon wiggled onto her shoulder then down her arm, its skin mimicking Doves’s arm color. You’re silly,Doves thought. Then, when her dragon grabbed onto the sheet, she pulled and lifted, revealing a number of items. Before Doves took it all in, she searched her dragon's mind to see if it was hungry or tired; it wasn't, at least for the time being.

The main item on display seemed to be a staff - The Mystery Staff, but it wasn't straight, and had it been, it would probably have been as tall as Doves, if not a couple inches taller. It had a sloping curve, though not so curved that it was useless as a defensive weapon, and a tight spiral at one end in the same direction as the curve. It looked to be made of wood, possible mahogany inlaid with some sort of gem or metal, though Doves didn't think so because of how thin it was. The wood-looking part was dark, almost like chocolate in color, while the inlay that intricately swirled around was the same color as her arm. Doves reached for it, but just before she touched it, the inlay, along with a number of other items, changed to a deep red. Pulling her hand back, Doves looked to her dragon, only to find that it too had changed to a deep red. Oh my... she thought as she rubbed the little one's head.

Other items on the table included a set of carving tools and leather case, as well as a set of bags, ranging in size and style from an animal backpack that would fit the little one now to a full sized hiking pack. One of the bags that stood out the most, though, was long and narrow, more like a belt than a bag. Opening it, Doves found that inside were about 20 empty crystal vials, no more than an inch or two long and less than half an inch wide, strapped in by little loops along with a small bowl. The hiking bag contained what looked to be leather armor, a bull whip curled up neatly, a braided leather string, a sleeping bag, and a change of clothes. The animal pack contained nothing, though there were runes engraved into the leather, making Doves think it had some sort of magical properties.

Also on the table were four books, in English, on different topics. The first was about how to make healing potions, called The Art of Healing, with Potions (Human Edition). The next seemed to be just the opposite of the first, called Potions of Defense: Keep those enemies at bay! (Works on Humans, Dragons, and Others Alike). The third was exactly like the first, but for dragons. And the fourth was a wood carving book, The Art of Wood Carving with Dragon Friends.

Invi stared at the man for a while, curious about who he was, but got bored and continued to look at her weapons until she was pretty much done inspecting what she had. One insanely over-sized (but awesome) sword, and seven daggers, ranging from normal cutting knife size to slightly longer than her arm. She had also gotten some curious gauntlets that looked normal, but were in fact a cross between wolverine claws and Assassin’s Creed hidden blades. She figured they were for close combat. She was about to put everything away when she noticed one last thing: a long, thin, metal stick. Again, this was about as long as her arm and was covered in many patterns, particularly a small moon pendant that hung on a chain attached to the end. It was bright red and resembled her necklace, and wrapped around the end was a dragon make from wine-red garnet. Picking it up, she inspected it, and found no use for it in battle, but it did look like... no... nooooo...

Could it be? Did the others have anything like this? Did it even work? Invi tapped the sheet that had originally covered her set, and watched in awe as it turned from a plain gold color to a vibrant red and silver. She also felt exhausted. Urrrrgh... whoa... yeah, it DEFINITELY worked.

She turned to Riv and Avalon. "Heyyyy, guyyys... I found this right at the back of my set and I was wondering if you guys had one too; I mean, look!" Invi pointed to the transformed sheet and smiled with glee. The gold was seeping back into it, but she didn't care. This revelation was waaay too awesome.

Riku quietly sat down in a corner, watching his little Grey sleep. He felt happy and proud of the little dragon. His eyes closed and he leaned back and nearly fell asleep, but then little Grey woke and hissed slightly to keep him awake. He blinked. "Why do you not let me sleep?" He watched as the dragon climbed onto his shoulder again, draping its tail over the side of his other shoulder. He grinned.

Riv's attention was ripped away from her bow when she noticed a slight commotion further down the row. It appeared Riku's and Doves's eggs were hatching. At the same time. Talk about brother-sister timing. She watched fondly for a few moments as the little dragons scraped free of the eggshells and instantly climbed around their human partners. It was such a sweet moment.

Just then, Riv noticed Reginald standing at the far edge of the upper level. Invi had apparently noticed him too, though she didn't seem to know who he was. He wasn't moving closer to them, however, and Riv was still intent on looking through the rest of her stuff, particularly her armor, so she turned her eyes away from him.

She figured she had about as many things as Invi, and she decided to make a list, just in case. She was just about to figure out how to make that list when she noticed a smaller table behind other things. Obviously she hadn't noticed it before, because at the first moment it held things no one would've noticed in between all of the awesome weaponry. There was a sturdy backpack, not quite as big as a regular camping one, but bigger than her usual one she had at home. At least it would hold exactly the things she'd need when travelling around.

But the backpack wasn't the only thing. There was a thick notepad with her name inscribed in the thin leather cover and a small dragon figure underneath it. It looked suspiciously like Skully, and that was confirmed when the little Phoenix jumped on top of it. Its tail lashed out towards the inscription, and, to Riv's surprise, a flame lashed out and left a mark on the picture. When Riv now looked at it, there was a tiny flame at the top of the picture dragon's tail. She laughed then, hearing how proud Skully apparently was at its attempt at art, and affectionately patted the little one on the head.

She removed the backpack and the notepad from the table to discover nothing else. The brunette girl was at first a bit disappointed, but something didn't feel quite right. Of course, the bag she was holding was way heavier than a normal empty one would be. She quickly sat down and started inspecting the insides of the bag.

She didn't get far, though. She noticed there were the essential pieces of clothing she would need, and she was happy to see they all had some parts that were colored deep green. She just got a glimpse of a bowl and some cutlery when Invi's question penetrated her mind, mostly because Skully wanted it to be that way.

Riv turned towards Invi to see her waving around some strange metal rod with something red hanging from it. Though she didn't recognize the item, she definitely saw what it had done to Invi's sheet, and it just clicked. It had to be a wand, or some kind of item like that. The fact that she didn't recognize it didn't mean it couldn't be what she thought it was. She had long figured out that everyone's things had an appearance that appealed the most to them. For example, she herself. Her sword looked like something she had imagined whilst reading Eragon. The shield... well, she hadn't seen or imagined that before, but it still fit her perfectly somehow. Her amazing bow, thanks to her love for elves, looked exactly like something Tolkien would give Thranduil to use. The daggers were obviously from Elektra, and even if she wasn't a fan anymore, they had been imprinted in her mind since the first time she had seen the movie as a small kid. There still wasn't anything she could connect to her slightly unhealthy fascination with vampires, but to be fair - those needed no other weapons than their teeth and unnatural strength and speed, and as long as she wasn't going to become one, she wouldn't get those either.

The other part of Invi's question then came to the front of her mind. The other girl had asked if they had something similar. She hadn't seen anything yet, but she also hadn't completely finished taking her inventory. Looking around in the weapons now didn't reveal any wand-like objects, but she hadn't gotten far with her rucksack yet. There could be something in the armor, but she didn't think so.

"Hold on, Invi, let me go through this bag and see if I've got anything in here. If not, then I don't have anything like that. Is that a wand of some sort?" she inquired whilst unpacking the clothes and kitchen supplies she'd seen before. She revealed more bowls and some vials, wrapped carefully in a thin cloth, which made her think of potions for a second. There were two thin books in one of the compartments, one about healing herbs and concoctions, and the other about defensive spells. She frowned. Spells and potions. Now all that was missing was her wand from Pottermore.

She had just finished that sentence when her fingers touched a slim, long box. Barely believing it, she pulled it out of the bag. The box was exactly like something out of Ollivander’s store. She let her fingers caress the cool exterior of the case, hearing only her heart thumping loudly in her chest. She couldn't believe it, even after everything she'd seen already, even after Skully. This had been her biggest dream of all. Getting a wand of her own... no, not just that. Getting THE letter had been even more important. That would've confirmed all her dreams. But the box in her hands was finally a proof; finally there was an actual thing she could see, touch and feel. It felt like time had stopped for her.

She stared at the case, not wanting to open it lest there was some mistake or a sick joke and it was empty. She was afraid to see her biggest dream of all crash and burn. But she wasn't alone. Skully was suddenly right beside her, encouraging her to open it. He wasn't sure what she would find in it either, but he was hoping for the best. And suddenly Riv noticed the pronoun she'd used for Skully. He. Why, she didn't know. The hatchling was just a day old and, other than the little wing bumps, hadn't shown any other signs of growing or gendering yet. But there was something about that mischievous nature (not that females couldn't be like that, but it was different) and the messages he kept sending that made Riv think of the little hatchling as male. Especially since the voice she'd heard in her head when the Phoenix sent her direct thoughts was distinctively becoming more masculine.

Momentarily distracted, she looked at the little hatchling who was staring up at her. A boy. She had a male dragon. That was kind of perfect, actually. He complemented the more rueful side of her, the tomboy in her, and she gave him the calm kindness of a woman. They would be a perfect pair, lethal when need be, and caring at other times. And right now, the little boy was pushing her to open that box.

She took a deep breath, and slowly, oh so slowly, slid the cover off. A quiet gasp escaped her lips. There, on top of deep purple satin, lay her wand. And when she said her wand, she meant it. It was the wand she had gotten, or rather the one that had chosen her, on Pottermore. She recognized it immediately from the golden gleam of the pear wood. From what she could remember from the Pottermore site, pear wood was very resilient, and no dark wizards ever got wands made of pear. That made her happier, even though she was slightly sad that it would be the only piece of lighter wood beside all the ebony-goodness she'd gotten. But that didn't matter now. She picked it up carefully, feeling a sense of lightheartedness and slight whooshing wind when her skin connected to her wand the first time. Some green sparks shot out of the tip, and it was so close to what she had always imagined getting her wand would be like, she laughed out loud like a child. She grabbed the wand more firmly, then placed it onto both of her hands and examined it.

The handle was intricately carved, with shapes that almost resembled fire to Riv. She smiled. It would fit in after all. The rest of the wand was almost straight, except for a few small bumps in the wood. It felt just right beneath her fingers. Skully then came up and sniffed at the wand. He drew back, looking obviously surprised, and the feelings radiating from him were mixed. He was happy to see me so happy, and he was definitely intrigued by the wand, but the biggest confusion in his mind was the core. It was, according to him, phoenix feather.

Obviously it was. At least on Pottermore, she'd had a pear wand with a phoenix feather core. Now that she thought about how she'd picked the Phoenix dragon as her own, AND had a wand with a phoenix core... it all fit. Skully was still a bit confused, but Riv promised to explain everything about Harry Potter and the fandom to him later, and he sat back down, content for now.

Meanwhile, the girl turned towards the still-waiting Invi. "Apparently I do have a wand after all," she said excitedly, showing her newest find. "It's straight out of the Harry Potter series. I'm not sure where yours is from since I don't recognize it, but maybe you can enlighten me?" she asked, still immensely curious.