

Kingdom of Dance Bonus Chapter

By Deborah Grace White

Timeline: immediately after Chapter Thirty

Rekavidur

Reka glanced at Dannelsair as they flew over the rooftops of Fernford. Within moments, they reached a speed that turned the landscape below into a formless blur. Turning his eyes forward again, he reached instead for his pair down the thread that permanently connected them. Sensing his touch, Dannelsair responded, the familiar note of her spirit thread a sweet chord in his mind.

He detected neither fear nor regret. She was content with their decisions, then, and ready for whatever consequences came.

They were of an accord.

With no humans in tow, they were free to move at a more natural speed. The dragon colony Reka had claimed as home for the past few years came into sight in a matter of minutes. The elders were nowhere to be seen, obviously having already reached the sanctuary of the realm.

Reka slowed his pace as he descended, his eyes passing over the groves of trees that sparkled in the sunlight. He had been as taken aback as Tanin to discover that the young enchanter, Obsidian, had actually removed branches from the trees. For a moment he'd wondered if Tanin would obliterate the human for the crime on the spot. Reka was glad he'd let Obsidian live. Quite apart from the fact that killing the soldier would clearly have devastated Zinnia, for whom Reka felt an idle fondness, it would be a shame to waste such powerful magic.

He'd been very interested to hear Tanin talk about dragons destroying cities because people removed items from the dragons' realm. Reka wondered if Tanin was thinking of the stories he'd heard himself, tales from both Vasilisa and Wyvern Islands—the colonies of his parents. He knew of one time when the dragons of Vasilisa had destroyed a village for building too close to their realm. According to Reka's father, that action had led to devastating consequences for the humans down the generations—consequences neither foreseen nor even imagined by the dragons.

Another support for his belief that dragons of the past should not be blindly trusted as to the wisdom of their decisions.

Reka and Dannelsair came in to land next to the lake, both of their eyes drawn to the lone mountain above. Had Idric really been concealing his experiments within it for so many months? How blind they'd been—even Reka, with his simmering suspicions, had underestimated the strength of Idric's powers of concealment.

The elders were waiting for them. Reka's eyes rested on Tanin, thoughts of his own past fresh in his mind. He'd never mentioned to Tanin that he'd seen the dragon's name before coming to Solstice—as he'd seen Idric's name. He didn't intend to tell him, either. He'd never heard the other dragon mention Vazula, and Reka didn't plan to be the one to bring it up.

He just hoped the banished Idric wasn't headed back that way. That would be a disaster of terrible proportions. And it would affect humans for whom Reka felt more than an idle fondness.

"Rekavidur, Dannelsair." Tanin's voice was solemn as he greeted them, the eyes of every elder fixed on the pair.

They dipped their heads in acknowledgment, and Tanin continued.

"By your own account, you have been guilty of breaching our sacred agreement with the humans, on a number of occasions. Do you accept responsibility?"

"We do," they said in unison.

"Do you wish to add anything to what you have already told us?"

Dannelsair shifted forward, and Reka lowered his head, indicating his willingness for her to speak on behalf of both of them. He listened calmly while she explained their decision—not made lightly—to breach the agreement, and how they had only done so in situations where they strongly suspected the magic in question to be aided by Idric, and not of truly human origin.

The elders all listened intently. Some of them looked disapproving, but there was no sign of the offense that had featured on every face when Idric's clandestine activities had been revealed. Reka took that as an encouraging sign.

"It is an unusual situation," Tanin said at last, once again acting as the elders' voice. "Rekavidur, you are not of this colony, and ruling on your conduct is not such a simple matter."

"I wish to be considered as one half of the whole that I form with my Heartsong," said Reka simply. "Whatever your decision regarding Dannelsair, I will share. And I will speak for it that my colony of origin will not take it as a slight on them."

Tanin inclined his head. "Very well." At a signal from him, the elders drew together.

Out of respect for their conference, Reka and Dannelsair took to the air, alighting a short distance away, amongst the grove of trees with diamond leaves. They didn't speak as they waited, and Reka felt no particular emotion. They had achieved what they had set out to do—protecting Solstice from the growing malice of Idric. He was gone now, and could no longer plague the human inhabitants with magic beyond their capacity to fight. They had not acted without expectation of consequences, and Reka was perfectly prepared to face whatever came. Like Idric, neither he nor Dannelsair could be killed. And unlike Idric, they had elsewhere to call home if necessary.

Although that would grieve Dannelsair. And therefore Reka.

Perhaps sensing the direction of his thoughts, his pair leaned toward him, extending her neck. He mirrored the gesture, and they laid their necks against one another, the scraping of their scales causing a musical tinkling that made the diamond leaves rustle responsively.

"I will be well," Dannelsair told Reka quietly.

A long low call alerted them that the elders were ready for their return, and they took to the air again without delay. When they landed in front of the semi-circle of dark-scaled dragons, it was again Tanin who addressed them.

"Your crimes are not in the nature of Idric's," he said simply. "Your intent was not malicious, and your actions were not unfounded. We do not consider your crimes worthy of permanent banishment."

In spite of her earlier assurances, relief emanated out from Dannelsair, shivering down the thread that connected her to Reka.

“However,” Tanin continued, “you did breach our laws, and you acted without sanction of the elders. Your conduct, although not malicious, was an instance of planned deception. And we do not welcome deception within our colony.”

Both dragons bowed their heads in acknowledgment of the justice of the observation.

“As such,” Tanin went on, “some response is required. We suggest that you depart from Solstice for a limited time. Perhaps a year, as the humans count.”

“You are gracious,” Reka said, dipping his head.

Tanin’s lips curved into a smile. “Not as gracious as you might suppose. Having stated that we do not sanction deception, I will speak plainly. It is in our interests for you to return soon, Rekavidur. Already, since lifting Idric’s magic from the land, I feel the stirrings of my farsight returning. But it has been many generations of men since I exercised the ability, and most of my brethren have never known it. We will be glad of your instruction on rediscovering our birthright.”

Reka smiled to himself. He had experience teaching others to master farsight, if Tanin only knew it. He had no intention of saying so. For all he didn’t warm to deception either, he felt no compulsion to share all his past, or all the secrets for which others had made him a custodian.

“I would be glad to provide what instruction I can,” he said simply. “And for my part, I will not be sorry to spend a year elsewhere. I wish to take Dannelsair to visit the colony of my ancestors.”

The elders all dipped their heads in approval. “A wise course,” said one. “We will send our greetings with you.”

There was no further discussion of practical details. They were dragons, not helpless humans who needed to be told the limits of their rules, or instructed on basic matters of survival. The elders had spoken, and they trusted Reka and Dannelsair to follow instructions and manage the details for themselves.

The two dragons retreated, readying themselves to depart. Reka felt almost excited at the prospect of returning to his former home, and especially of taking Dannelsair to meet his parents. Perhaps even his human friends. But there was a muted quality to Dannelsair’s mind, and it caused him to stop and give her his full attention.

“You are grieved?”

She smiled at him. “Grieved is too strong a word. But...” she let out a tinkling laugh. “You will think me foolish. But I told Zinnia that we looked forward to our next meeting with her. She will look for us, down by the shore, and be confused and perhaps hurt by our absence. Penny, also, may look for me in her dreams.”

Reka leaned forward, again placing his neck against Dannelsair’s. “I do not think you foolish, My Heartsong. I know better than most dragons what it means to be fond of humans, to have true friendships with them. But both Penny and Zinnia have futures before them, and mates by their side. The truth is they will not miss you as much as you fear. I have observed humans at very close proximity. They are easily distracted, and their lives, though short, are full.”

He closed his eyes, reaching down a different thread, across a further distance. “My own farsight is returning as well. It will take time to reach full strength, but even now I can sense my humans, although the distance is extreme. You will be able to follow your friends in our absence. You may even be able to reach Penny’s dreams. And a year will pass quickly, even for the humans.”

Dannelsair smiled. “You are right. I am eager to learn the ways of farsight.”

“And I am eager to teach you,” Reka assured her. He closed his eyes, probing her essence with his mind. “You alone of this colony were able to grasp a shadow of it, even through Idric’s concealing shroud. I do not doubt your capacities will exceed what one could expect in a dragon of your youth. I look forward to discovering with you the full extent of your core magic.”

“And we will be together,” Dannelsair added, as a further softening factor to their temporary exile.

“We will,” Reka agreed, as confident of it as he was of his own magic. “We will be together until our scales are as dark as Tanin’s.”

Dannelsair smiled in contentment.

“But for now, my brightly-scaled young heartsong,” Reka said, beginning to feel the tug of adventure, “a journey awaits us. And I think you will find that my descriptions fall short of reality. You will be amazed by all that I can show you.”

He turned to the sky. With the satisfaction of their success behind them, and his heartsong by his side, he was more than ready for another flight.