Dragon Rider, Story notes and summary.

Small country consisting of islands with natural produce or other rare goods indigenous to only the islands, is highly guarded by dragon riders. A special force limited only to the island nation since the dragons only habitat is the islands itself, with the motto “A rider does not pick the dragon, the dragon picks the rider”  
 There is one major rule for the nations people, that you’re are born into the position you will be for the rest of your life, example your parents are farmers you will also be a farmer. There are exceptions such as a farmer marries a merchant. If the child is born a boy he would become a farmer. If it is born a girl she would become a merchant, unless the country is in low numbers of one specific job. Many higher-class woman or noblewoman are born just as housewives and if they are rich enough they would higher a lower class housewife or servant to take care of their chores for them.

As children the citizens are giving a placement tattoo on the inside of their forearm indicating what their status and job is. Aiven’s father grips the young boys wrist. “Dad I don’t want to!” the young boy cries. “It’s not your choice, you’ve come of age.” His father lectures as he drags him into the official placement tattoo parlor.

A young boy named Aiven was born in to the bakery business, a commoner’s job. He was giving the bakers tattoo locking him to the profession for life. His father hands Aiven over to the worker who forcefully pulls him over to the table in the center of the room. Aiven struggles to free himself from the man’s grips, making no progress accept tiring himself out.

The man picks up Aiven ignoring as he thrashes his body in his grasp and lays him down on the wooden table. He holds him down as an assistant straps down his arms. A tear rolls down Aiven’s cheek as he pulls against the restraints, his body immobilized.

The worker goes over to his station picking up his ink and tattoo equipment, which contains two separate rods. One rod with sharp points that is dipped into the ink and held over the flesh while the other taps it against it causing it to hit the arm below it. The assistant finishes sketching the design on Aiven’s arm as the worker readies himself. He hovers the spiked tip over Aiven’s pale flesh and he taps the rod. The spikes dig into Aiven’s skin burying the ink with it. Aiven yelps as the pain runs up his arms as it over whelms his body.

The assistant unhooks the straps around Aiven’s wrist and cleans up his arm before wrapping some cloth around it loosely. Aiven’s father helps him sit up from the table, “See that wasn’t so bad was it?” Aiven doesn’t say a word instead he peaks under the cloth as his bakery tattoo locking him to the bread business for the rest of his life. *Such a commoner’s job* he thinks to himself.

Later that week Aiven was playing with one of few toys he possessed, a small wooden dragon on the floor of the bakery. His mother kneels down by his side, “Aiven dear, what would you like for your tenth birthday? It is one of the most special birthdays.” Aiven jumps up ecstatic, “I want a dragon! A real one!” “A real dragon? Why would you want one of those? Must be hard to take care of.” His mother reasons. “Cause I want to become a dragon rider! I know all the names of the greats, and the dragon rider history!” Aiven says excitedly. His mother smiles, “I’m not sure that your father and I can afford a real dragon, maybe we can get you a another toy one.”

Becoming a Dragon Rider wasn’t easy nor common they were the highest rank and lived a lavish life amongst the nobles, and were giving the highest of respects. But only a handful is born every generation.

Aiven longs to be a Dragon Rider with all his heart. He stands at the dough counter watching his parents need the bread dough. He looks up at his father and whines, “Why can’t I be dragon rider?” His father looks down at him with a stern voice says, “For the hundredth time Aiven, It’s the way of our land, it helps society run smoothly.” “It’s how it’s always been honey, simple as that.” His mother adds. “It’s not fair!” Aiven complains before stomping his way to the bedroom.

Aiven throws himself onto the small bed, “It’s not fair,” he mumbles as he looks at his tattoo, “I didn’t choose this.”

Aiven wakes up one morning his tattoo is now healed and set into his arm with and usual urge to venture out into the mountains that surround the outline of the island, as a wall protecting the valley and the kingdom inside. “Mom, mom can I go exploring?” He asks. She thinks about it for a moment, “Hmmm as long as you don’t go to far, be home before dusk”, she allows.

Aiven takes off in a sprint through the town and slows as he comes to the foot of the mountain side and begins making his way up the un-pathed incline. As he makes his way up the trees start to become denser most likely do to the loggers cutting near the bottom. He walks around large tree trunks and hops over boulders and pushes his way through bushes. The sun breaking through the thick leaves above.

Aiven shimmies his way through a tall hedge the stops in his tracks speechless staring straight ahead. A young dragon the same age as him stares back at him not much more than five feet away. They lock eyes Aiven’s light green eyes staring into the dragon’s bright orange with maroon edges.

Its dark orange scales glisten in the rays of sun casting through the treetops. Instead of having the bat shaped body all the other dragons have, he notices how the dragon stands on four legs balanced gracefully on the tips on his claws in a ready to flight stance. His feather wings held slightly off his body to make him appear bigger, feathers folded against his tail with the ability to spread out.

Aiven is more than excited; he reaches out offering his hand to the dragon. The young dragon at first leans in to sniff Aiven but without reason he becomes startled and scratches Aiven’s forearm. Aiven pulls his arm into himself holding on to it with his other hand as he watches the dragon turn and run at such grace and speed as if he had dreamt it.

He can fill the warm liquid running down his arm. He looks down at his forearm to see three large gashes across his placement tattoo. Aiven quickly pulls off his shirt as blood drips to the ground. He wraps it around his arm as tight as he can and takes off back to town.

By the time he gets back to town his shirt is drenched in blood. He weakly pushes the door to the bakery open. “Aiven! What on earth happened to you!” His mother freaks. “Sit, sit” She urges. Aiven sits on the chair that she pulled out as she gets their medical kit.

She set in front of Aiven on the table, “Ok this is going to hurt a bit.” She pulls a small alcohol bottle from the bag and pours it over his arm. Aiven cringes as it runs through his wounds. His mom pulls out a needle and wire and begins to stitch up his arm. “What did you do?” She asks. Aiven explains “I was climbing this tree out on the mountain side and the branch broke and I fell”. His mom does not believe him but cannot come up with her own logical conclusion. “I’m going to let this little mishap slide by as long as you promise to stay home until these heal.” She informs him while referring to his newly stitched arm.

Later that night while sleeping Aiven started having this peculiar dream of emerging from a cave under a tree and sprinting through the mountainside woods. The moon high in the sky as he looks out of the cliff side and watch as the wild dragons crossed the ocean waters between the surrounding islands. He would stretch out his wings trying so hard to pump them up and down but they could not lift his body off the ground. A heavy feeling of loneliness weighs across his body before he wakes up.

Every night for the next couple of days Aiven has these dreams all similar but not exactly the same. Sometimes he does not go to the cliff side to watch the dragons but instead goes to a viewpoint over looking the city.

Aiven sits in the bedroom thinking about his dreams. He analyzes his bandaged arm then glances out the door to the rest of the small house and the bakery. He gets up from where he was sitting and walks over to the window and pulls open the wooden frame. Using one arm he lifts himself up and over the sill.

He sneaks away from the bakery and straight for the mountains knowing exactly where he is heading. He walks up the path he has taken a week a go and passes the location he had is encounter with the young dragon. He walks straight up to a large tree with a hollow trunk as if he has been there many times before.

Aiven ducks his head peering inside the trunk he pushes aside some shrubbery revealing a secret entrance. He lowers his body down the hole and crawls through the short tunnel leading him to a cave over looking the ocean cliff side. There standing in the center of the cave is the young dragon. Aiven smiles and friendly says, “Hi again.” He holds out his hand with the wounded arm. The dragon is hesitant but then slowly walks up to him and pushes his head against Aiven’s palm. A feeling of comfort and belonging floods the both of them as they make contact.

As often as he could Aiven would sneak out as often as he could to visit the dragon. They sit next to each other in the cave looking out at the ocean. “So what’s your name, I’m Aiven.” Aiven asks. “What you don’t have one? Seriously, um lets make one for you.” Aiven begins to search his mind. “Hmmm Ryu? Remmi? Well you’re orange, so um Hisaki? Yeah that one? Ok that settles it you’re name will be Hisaki.”

Aiven leans back, “Being able to choose your own name, what’s it like being able to make such an big decision so easily. What’s it like making a decision for yourself at all?” Aiven ponders out loud. “Normal? Yeah I wish, not where I come from.” Aiven pauses, “Necessary you say, yeah I guess it’s the little choices you make for yourself that can bring you happiness.”

Aiven sit in their new usual spot hidden in the shrubbery on the cliff side of rock pillar canyon. Aiven rubs his now healed thick scars that have mutilated his placement tattoo as they watch the new Dragons Riders being trained.

A girl his age with long blonde hair pulled back and a beige colored dragon especially drew his interest. Even though she was one of the youngest in the group she was progressing the fastest. “Before you learn to do anything with your dragon you must gain each others trust, not until then will your dragon respond to even the simplest commands such as to come to your side.” The instructor says as he walks down the line of new riders and their young dragons. “I will assume you have all be building a bond with your dragon am I correct? So you must all spread out leaving behind your dragon use your personal whistle to call your dragon over to your location.”

Aiven uses scraps of wrapping he finds around the shop and jots down notes the instructor is saying as he watches intently.

The instructor watches as the students try to call their dragons over to them on their own timing. He shakes his head, as some dragons don’t even acknowledge their riders call at all. While other dragons slowly respond to their riders commands and begin to make their way over to them hesitantly. Then his eyes come across the young blonder girl, “Kisa, wonderful job.” He says proudly as he sees Kisa and her dragon sitting together long before any of the other riders. “Now that’s what I call a bond.”

“Pffft she’s got nothing on us, right Hisaki?” Aiven gloats. After each class is finished Aiven would then take his notes with Hisaki and practice what they watched.   
 Aiven sprints down the rock canyon next to Hisaki, “Come one flap, flap.” Aiven encourages Hisaki. Hisaki spread his wings moving them up and down as he tries to push himself off the ground. They both slow to a stop, “How did that girl do it? She got her dragon in the air so easily.” Aiven wonders. “What? Oh don’t you go saying that, she’s not better than us. She just got an upper hand cause she has a teacher.” Aiven points out.

“I’ve got an idea, Ok so I’m going to put my hands out like this,” Aiven describes as he puts his hands next to each other and holds them out like a step. “And you’re going to run and step up onto them and at the same time I’m going to lift you up as you jump and take off.” Aiven finishes.

Hisaki agrees and runs back a good distance as Aiven readies his position. “Alight Go!” He shouts. Hisaki takes off full sprint towards Aiven his eyes fixed on the hand placed out in front of him. Hisaki gracefully jumps into the air his wings spread straight towards the stars. He touches Aiven’s hands and Aiven lifts up pushing Hisaki higher as he launches off his hands. Hisaki forcefully pushes his wings down stirring up dust below them. Aiven hollers as Hisaki takes his first flight.

Aiven and Hisaki already knew they had a special connection unlike the other dragon riders in the class. They were not only able to share thoughts but last a couple years of practice they were also able to share sight and think as one individual. No matter the distance they were able to hear the other and see through the others eyes.  
 As Aiven neared his 14th birthday he was burst from the bedroom in a hurry to see Hisaki before he was given and chores. He stumbles slightly as he tries to slip on his shoes mid walk. He just grabs the door handle as hears a loud thump, he can feel the vibration in his feet as something heavy hits the ground hard.

Aiven’s hand slowly slides down the hand until the last finger leaves. His hand drops to heavy to his side swinging slightly. He hesitantly looks over his shoulder. Horror strikes his every nerve as he sees his mother lying on the ground near the bread table. He finds himself sliding onto the floor next to her, as his mind races trying to figure out what to do. “Dad!” Aiven screams, “Dad! Help!” His he shouts again voice cracking as he chokes on the tears that begin to stream down his face.

His Father appears from the front of the shop, rushing to his mother’s side. Aiven pushes himself up from the ground and stumbles back wards as his dad picks up his mother carrying her to the bedroom. He turns and looks back at Aiven with his dear in the headlights expression. “Aiven snap out of it, I need you to run to the doctor’s house.” He demands. Aiven doesn’t move a muscle he can barely even breathe. “Now!” His father yells at him.

Aiven takes off running, booking it through crowded streets. His mind recoils so deep that Hisaki is almost unable to read him. He watches as Aiven turns to autopilot as he runs to the doctor’s house.

Aiven doesn’t remember how he had got back home. But his mind slowly comes back to reality as he watches the doctor hover over his mother. “What’s wrong with her?” His father asks concerned. The doctor stands up straight and turns to him, “Pneumonia, a severe case of it too, seems like she’s had it for bit now but has been hiding the fact.” “Will she get better?” His dad questions. The doctor replies “I can’t say for certain, I’m sorry with how long it was left untreated her chances are low, I can give her medicine to help her and” Aiven’s dad cuts the doctor off, “Lets talk about this in the other room.” He whispers then looks over at Aiven.

They exit the room leaving Aiven by himself, he leans against the wall as the room begins to spin. “I wont be able to hang out for awhile Hisaki.” Aiven thinks. Hisaki comforts him from depths of the mountains.

Over the next two weeks Aiven spends as much time as he can next to his mother. Even though the medicine helps her stay awake enough to talk, Aiven watches her get progressively worse each day.

Hisaki can feel Aiven’s emotions as if they were his own. He shares his past of his own mother leaving when he was only a hatchling, and being on his own without a family until they crossed paths.

Aiven sits on a wooden chair that he had pulled from the front room next to his mother. She watches him as he draws a picture of a four-legged dragon. She smiles down at his drawing, “You might not have been born one Aiven, but you will always be a dragon rider in my eyes.” Aiven freezes at those words the pencil shaking in his hand hovering over his picture. He looks over at his mother to thank her for everything she’s done. His heart stops as he sees her head sunken into the pillow her eyes gently resting close. The pencil slips from his fingertips rolling across his paper and onto the ground. Aiven touches her lifeless hand as a tear rolls down his cheek dripping onto his drawing smudging the lead. Aiven took those last words she said to heart and knew that he would find a way to become a rider.

Aiven lays upon Hisaki’s back who has grown at least 3 times as big over the past 4 years. Aiven closes his eyes, soaking in the rays of light raining down through the trees. Hisaki lays down as they near the rock pillar canyon and sees the students lined up along the edge of the canyon. He jolts his body tossing Aiven onto the ground. “What!” Aiven says startled. Hisaki looks over at Aiven then back over to the dragon riders. Aiven crawls over and peers through the shrubbery, “What’s on the dragons? Saddles?...Wait they’re gonna learn to actually ride today!” Aiven excitedly says as he leans in further to see.

The young riders all face the instructor with their dragons sitting on the edge of the cliff. “This is the moment you have been training the past few years for. The only way you will succeed is if you can trust your dragon in his ability of flight that you personally taught to him. If you crash it is not your dragon’s fault, it is your fault in poor leadership. You understand?” The young riders nod their heads in awareness.

“Now which one of you will like to go first?” The instructor asks. Everyone’s arms remained locked at their side as they nervously eye each other in hopes one will be sacrifice themselves and go first. Kisa looks down the line of students then raises her hand. “Ah, Kisa my star pupil. May you show these cowards on how it’s done.” The instructor insists. “Yes sir.” Kisa accepts.

She walks over to her beige colored dragon that lowers its body down so she can climb up onto its back. She sits calmly upon the dragon as it leans over the edge of the cliff. She leans forward the reins held tight in her hands with a flick of her wrist the dragon leaps from the edge diving slightly in the air before expanding her wings and soaring through the air.

Aiven can’t believe it, “Did you see that she flying, they’re flying. They’re actually flying.” Aiven looks over at Hisaki, “You know what this means”, He suggest.

Back in town Aiven steals some spare ropes and old leather straps from a couple different black smiths and made a makeshift “saddle” basically a harness he can attach himself to on Hisaki.

Aiven sat upon Hisaki’s back as they peered down the cliff into the pillar rock canyon. A few rocks break off under Hisaki’s weight as his claws dig into the side as he leans more and more over the edge. With their minds synced they launch of the edge diving towards the ground gaining enormous amounts of speed. They pull up at the last minute. Hisaki spreading his large feathered wings the bright orange and maroon under feathers shimmer as the glide through the air. Riding together came natural as if they have been doing it their entire lives. Aiven holds onto the harness as the wind rushes past him. Since he does not need to use reins to control his dragon like the other riders do, he is able to make faster commands and make sharper turns by just thinking it. As if they were one body.

For the next few years they practice in secrecy late at night, mastering their synchronization and improving their agility. They work on advantages to having four legs such as being able to fly close to the ground and go into a run and take off again with out losing to much speed or momentum. Or able to fly towards a wall touching it while turning around and launching off of it like a swimmer in a race.   
 Aiven shivers in the cave as he tries to spark a fire. Even with the drift wood covering the entrance small drafts seep through blowing out the embers. Hisaki lays watching as he takes up most of the cave now. Hisaki can feel an itch building in the back of his throat. He tries to ignore it but it grows intolerable and he coughs onto the fire pit. Aiven jumps back as it ignites, flames reach out and up towards the ceiling. It calms down and Aiven leans over the small fire, “Did you just, you you can breathe fire!” Aiven says shocked. “No way, I’ve never read about someone owning a element dragon. I thought it was only in the legends.” Aiven mentions.

Aiven and Hisaki are now 16 years old and are resting over looking the pillar canyon as the sun rises. Kisa the young blonde Dragon Rider appears with her dragon looking down into the canyon. Aiven and Hisaki quickly hide out of view and watch the girl who has been named the Prodigy of the Century. Aiven scoffs, “Typical she has to get her warm up practice before her lessons start. Must be nice to not have to hide what you love to do.” Aiven stands up abruptly, “lets race her.”

Aiven and Hisaki stand on the cliffs edge looking down upon Kisa who spots them immediately. She lands her dragon next to them and demands “Who are you, and what are you doing here, baker boy.” Aiven smirks, “I will only tell you if you agree to race me first”. Kisa overly confident in her skills agrees, thinking an unmarked illegal rider will be nothing compared to a professionally trained birth right rider.

They line up along the edge of the canyon on their marks. Kisa shouts. “GO!” and they both take off head first towards the canyon grounds. Kisa pulls up first taken a larger more gradual swoop to even herself out as Aiven waits a little longer and takes a sharp turn to pull himself up. Hisaki’s wings beat at the right time launching them in the lead. Kisa cannot keep up around every tight turn or through every crevasse she falls more and more behind.

Aiven reaches the shoreline and Hisaki skids to a stop on the sandy beach. Kisa emerges from the canyon and lands beside them. “Now tell me,” she asks frustrated with her first defeat. Aiven tells her everything from the very first time he met Hisaki, showing her his scars.

“That’s impossible!” Kisa exclaims. “Only the greats were able to accomplish such a bond with their dragons. Syncing thoughts took them half a life time to master, and others were never even able to accomplish it at all let alone being able to share thoughts and site from far distances. And those were born dragon riders you’re just a baker’s son”

Aiven looks at Hisaki who looks at him back and they both look at Kisa. “You witnessed us fly, didn’t you? I don’t see any reins on my dragon.” Kisa gives in, “Fine I believe you.” Aiven smiles, “Now if only the rest of the country was as easy to convince as you. You wont tell them right?” “No, it’ll be our little secret” Kisa answers.

Over the next year they become close friends but strangers in public. A Dragon Rider with talent like hers wouldn’t rarely even go to the lower class shops and befriending a worker from down there was unthinkable.

“This is my favorite place to come to relax after vigorous amounts of training.” Kisa looks over her should as she talks. Aiven follows behind her as she leads him down a narrow path on one of the surrounding islands. “I have never been over here before. Actually I’ve never been off our island before.” Aiven admits. “Yeah? I guess its always good to be with someone you trust during your first time.” Kisa sticks out her tongue out at Aiven who becomes flushed.

“So do you trust me?” Kisa asks. Aiven becomes flustered and stumbles with his footing, “Yeah, yeah of course.” Kisa grins, “Good, see this hole in the ground in front of me” Aiven peers around her. Kisa explains, “You’re gonna lower yourself into there. Keep your hands across your chest and your feet together.” Aiven becomes confused, “You want me to what?” “I thought you said you trusted me”, Kisa teases.

Aiven stands over the hole looking down into the dark abyss. He sits down and lowers his feet in. He can feel water rushing around his ankles. He looks back at Kisa who urges him on. He lowers the rest of himself down sitting in a small river with a strong current that begins to pull him along. He crosses his arms as it takes him down a steep slide winding back and forth. The ceiling starts to raise up as the tunnel grows larger, glow worms line the ceiling above him like stars. He starts gaining speed as the river caries further into the cavern.

Then he was weightless. It only lasted a split second before he was falling. With a large splash he is engulfed in the deep water. He looks up at the moonlight barely passing through the surface. He breaks the surface and takes a deep breath of air and looks around at the large cave, with the moon shining in through a whole in the top. Kisa flies out of the slide shouting with glee as she canon balls into the water. Aiven swims over to her and asks, “How did you find this place?” “By accident, I fell through that whole one day and ended up here.” Kisa answers. “You know you’re the first person I’ve brought here?” She adds. Aiven laughs, “You know its always good to be with someone you trust during your first time.” Kisa splashes him, “Oh shut up.” Aiven splashes her back as they laugh together.

At the age of 20 a few years later after a long night of flying and goofing off practicing fancy moves in the sky they lie in the sand where Aiven had told her his story. The early morning sun shining down on them. Aiven brings up what has been on his mind all his life, “Do you think I can convince them to let me join the Riders?” Kisa replies, “That’s out of the question, they would arrest you as soon as you reveal yourself.”

Aiven sits up “You don’t think I can become one?” “No, Aiven I’m sorry but you were not born as a Rider.”

Aiven stands up and walks over to Hisaki, “Don’t you ever think that system is unjust, that people may be born with talents that they will never know of because of they weren’t born into it.” Kisa argues back, “They have reliable reasons why things are the way they are, you cant go changing the rules because you believe you were born to be something you’re not.”

Aiven gets mad, “Look me in the eyes and tell me I’m not a true rider.”

Kisa looks down at the ground. Aiven continues, “Everyone dreams to do what they love, and to be honored,” he motions at Kisa, “no not even that to at least be accepted for it is a dream come true, but you wouldn’t understand now would you, Prodigy Dragon Rider.”

Aiven grabs hold of Hisaki’s harness as he begins to sprint. Aiven heaves himself up on to Hisaki’s back as he takes off. Kisa realizes what time it is and where Aiven is heading. She sprints to her dragon and hopes on. Taking off as fast as she can but is already far behind Aiven.

Aiven spots as the Kisa’s officers stand at the top of the Rock Pillar Canyon with what’s left of Kisa’s undergraduate classmates. Hisaki lands hard in front of them and stretches out his wings to intimidate them.

“What in the world!” Kisa’s teacher announces as they all stare upon Hisaki. Aiven slides off his back and faces everyone, his placement tattoo in full site. “Baker boy! Will you please explain why you were just on the back of a dragon!?” The teacher yells. Aiven, “It’s mine.” Aiven begins to explain himself to the officers. But they shake their heads ignoring his reasoning.

Kisa finally catches up and lands beside Aiven. “Kisa, did you know about this boy?” Kisa goes to speak but Aiven buts in before she can answer, “She saw me riding and was trying to capture me” The officer nods “I see good job Kisa. Men arrest him for the capture and illegal riding of a dragon” The officer turns and looks at Aiven in the eyes, “The sentence is automatically death, no trial.”

Hisaki suddenly takes off backwards disappearing into the canyon. “See, you’re no rider boy. A true Rider’s dragon would never abondon his side.” The officer laughs. Aiven backs up as he talks, “That is true unless the rider can still communicate with his dragon when they separate.” Aiven steps backwards to far and falls off the side of the cliff.

The men and Kisa run to the edge of the cliff as Hisaki flies straight out from the canyon carrying Aiven on his back. “After him!” the officer shouts.

Aiven flies across the island and high into the clouds the other riders unable to keep up with his swiftness. They lose site of him as he flies around the outside cliffs on the islands. Hisaki grabs hold of the side of the mountain and quickly climbs into the almost invisible cave. Kisa watches nervously as she pretends to be helping search for Aiven.

Aiven waits long into the night before he emerges from the secret entrance in the forest. He quietly runs a long the mountain side towards the town staying out of site from the Riders still on patrol circling the island. Aiven makes it all the way back to his families bakery. He tiptoes into the back to gather some supplies. His father lights the over hanging candle filling the room with light, “You have every rider searching for you, the King wants you dead.” He pauses Aiven just stares at him, his dad continues, “What would your mother think.”

Aiven looks him dead in the eyes, “She would be proud of me, she knew what I was born to do, she knew what I could become.” Aiven pushes past him into the bedroom and begins packing a bag. He rolls up a animal skin sleeping back and ties it to his back pack. His dad speaks to him from the other room, “Are you sure you’ve made the right choice.” Aiven emerges from the room wearing his backpack and holding a empty satchel, “Have you ever wanted to be something other than a baker, dad.” His dad pauses for a moment then replies “Yes a musician, I loved the performers on the streets ever since I was young, I dreamed of writing songs so beautiful they would have me play them for the nobles at royals dinners, but I was born a baker so the tunes remained in my head.” He pauses again, “You know what Aiven, go, fly as until you cant fly anymore, I will tell them you never returned here.”

Aiven’s shoulders relax as he looks at his father without saying a work he stuffs some bread into his satchel and heads towards the door, he looks back at his father “Dad, pick up that guitar and learn, I want to hear the songs that you have been humming all my life.” Aiven turns and disappears out the door.

He makes his way back up the mountain, as the trees become denser he looks back one last time at the town he loved, but the love was limited like the choices they let him make.

Aiven slips through the secret entrance to the cave where Hisaki is waiting. Aiven speaks to him outloud, “You ready?” Hisaki stands up and stretches answering that as a yes. Aiven breathes in deep and exhales, “Me too.”

Aiven climbs up onto Hisaki’s back strapping himself on and adjusts his backpack and satchel, “Let’s fly until we can’t fly anymore.”

Hisaki leaps out of the cave entrance diving towards the water, he spreads his wings as the glide across the warm. They stay low as the leave the island behind them. With all the strength he has Hisaki beats his wings while arching upwards, sending them climbing into the clouds.

Hidden in the clouds, Aiven and Hisaki are able to fly over the large port town unnoticed. Aiven only has geographical knowledge of the neighboring empire across the water from his island the stretches to the east and north. They turn their backs to northern star and fly south to the unknown land. Where he doesn’t know about the people and hopefully they don’t know about him.

Aiven lost track of how long they where flying, even with the ability to share energy, (meaning Hisaki is able to borrow Aiven’s energy while resting his own.) They know this is not the first sunrise they’ve seen since they took off into the sky, and they are running on fumes. Aiven looks down and searches the surroundings, only seeing mountains and lush plant growth. They come up to a small valley with a run down village nestled in.

Hisaki lands with a thud and stumbles a little from exhaustion just outside the town. Aiven slides of Hisaki and whispers to him, “I’m not sure if they’ve seen dragons before since we’re so far from home, maybe you should keep your head down so you look less threatening.” Hisaki lowers his head to Aivens height and follows behind him toward the village.

Aiven looks around at the falling apart buildings and at the almost falling apart people who are staring back at him. Aiven puts up his hands apologetically, “Im sorry to intrude, don’t worry he’s friendly.” Children come running out from an unknown source shouting, “A Dragon Racer! A Dragon Racer!” They pile around Aiven and Hisaki’s feet and ask, “May we pet your dragon?” Aiven is confused but allows them. He looks over at a tall burly man making his way over to him.

The man smiles a toothy grin, “Well look at this, what brings a Dragon Racer to this little neck of the woods, on your way to sign up for the Games.” Aiven looks at him puzzled, “Excuse me? What is a dragon racer?” The man is shocked, “You don’t know! Boy where do you come from? You have a dragon and you don’t know?” The towns people begin to crowd around to see Aiven and Hisaki, a few chuckle at Aiven’s naïve nature.

Aiven replies, “Up north.” “North? Hmm come show me on the map, I’m Bernard” Bernard says as he guides Aiven into the building nearest to them. “Aiven, and that’s Hisaki” Aiven replies as he enters the building. He looks around at what he assumes must be a pub, and on the wall is a large map with the surrounding empires. Aiven spots his island right away he walks up and points to it on the map. “Really!, There’s a town on those islands?” Bernard questions as he leans in for a closer look at the map, with the other men from the pub leaning over him to look. “Aiven well yes, its actually quite large, there’s a whole highly populated city and its own kind who also owns the surrounding islands, that’s where the dragons live.”

“Ah, dragons live on islands down here too.” Bernard says. Aiven looks up at him, “Excuse me, but where exactly are we and what are dragon racers.” Bernard points down at the farthest part of the peninsula and just of the coast there are a few specs of islands. “Yep we live just over the mountain from Azadgaon its where they hold the Annual Dragon Games, that’s where people who capture and train a dragon are able to compete in a series of games and races, depending on their level. They win can win a hefty amount of gold and supplies to last them the whole year. The elite level winners win enough to last a life time.” Aiven stares at the man trying to process what he is being told. Bernard continues, “I guess you can say they are our star athletes out here, they’re pretty famous.” Aiven’s eyes widen “Can anyone enter?” Bernard smiles, “Anyone with a dragon, do that no have anything like that up north.”

Aiven sits down at a table the men pile around him to listen to him. Aiven explains his society and their rules, he then explains his tattoo and scare and everything up until why is currently sitting where he is now. Bernard scoffs, “That sounds like bull.” Aiven glances at him, “Excuse me?” Bernard takes a sip of the beer the waitress had brought for each of them, “Citizens are stripped of self actualization, labeled as one thing for the rest of their lives and only seen as that.” Aiven rubs his thumb over his scarred tattoo. Another man chimes in, “That’s not how we do it in the south especially not this town, we help out with around the town cause we want to, not because the job was chosen for us. But we tend to sometimes stay in the family business cause that’s what families for.” A more drunken man from the back adds in, “This whole town is like one big family, lets eat!” Then men all shout together, Aiven laughs as the toss their arms around him and each other singing a song about drinking.

Aiven takes his last bite of the food he was giving and pushes his half full beer glass back and forth in front of him. Bernard plops himself next to Aiven and asks “What are you thinking about?” Aiven looks at Bernard seriously, “I’m going to enter the Annual Dragon Games.” Bernard’s excitedly slaps Aiven on the back, “Yeah their you go boy!” Aiven chugs some more of his beer, “And I’m going to give 70% of my winnings to this town.” Bernard sits back and really looks Aiven he shakes his head, “We can’t accept that.” Aiven turns to him completely, “Fine how about 60%, and I’m not going to take no for an answer.” Bernard crosses his arms, “Why do you want to give a town you just met something like that.” Aiven looks out on the men laughing around the pub, “Because you were the first people to truly make me feel accepted. You all look so at home, so at peace with one another, I can tell you truly care for each individual in this village.” Aiven looks down at his beer unable to look at Bernard while he speaks. “All I’ve wanted in my life was to be acknowledge as Dragon Rider and you guys gave it to me.” Bernard places his hand on Aiven’s shoulder, “You can stay in this town as long as you want, you’re accepted to join us with open arms.”

Kisa stands in line and listens to her officer’s instructions, “ We have no current leads on the location of the fugitive, but we aren’t not giving up on our search. He has committed a major criminal act and will be sentenced correctly for his crimes. Kisa!” Kisa jumps slightly at her name, “Yes sir?” The Officer walks over to her, “As my prized student you will be joining the search team across the waters, you are dismissed to ready your dragon and join at the front gates.” Kisa replies, “Yes sir, thank you sir” She steps back from the line and walks towards the housing their dragons are kept. She thinks to herself, “Aiven what have you done, please be far away from here by now.”

Aiven wakes up on the spare bed in Bernard’s house. He can hear his wife in the other room cooking. He looks out the window and sees Hikasi lounging outside with the town children crawling on top of him.

Aiven steps out of the small house and walks over to Hisaki who lazily glances up to him. Bernard drops the logs he was carrying and walks over to Aiven, “Did you sleep well?” Aiven appreciatively says, “Yes, thank you so much more everything, I mean it.” Bernard motions to Hisaki, “So you really believe you can win? I haven’t see a four legged dragon before, is he fast.” A smile creeps across Aiven’s face, “The fast in the north.” Bernard laughs, “That’s good enough for me to believe in you boy. The games are not until next week, but sign ups are currently going on, lets get some breakfast in you before you take off on us.”

“You all packed?” Bernard ask standing in the bedroom door way after breakfast. Aiven rolls down his sleeves covering some harness straps attaching from his hands up his arms disappearing into his shirt. “What do you go on there?” Bernard notices. Aiven rolls his sleeve up a bit, “It’s a special harness I recently made to take the pressure off a single joint, it evens it across my entire body.” Aiven picks up his bags as Bernard just nods in response.

Aiven sits upon Hisaki as the towns people gather near by to see him off. Bernard gives him his farewell for now, “It’s just right over the mountain, the city is right along the ocean. If you go south of it you will see the stadiums, and where the games take place. There should be a good amount of dragons hanging out on the cliff sides near by. There will be a check in by the stadium entrance. We’ll see you in a week.” Aiven waves, “I’ll see you in a week.”

Hisaki takes off shooting into the sky in the eastern direction, leaving a strong gust behind. Bernard’s wife stands next to him and covers her eyes from the dust, “ Do you think he can win?” Bernard watches Aiven and Hisaki grow smaller in the sky, “With that take off right there he would already be in the lead.”

Aiven and Hisaki reach the top of the mountains and gaze upon the massive city stretching up the steep mountain cliff and across the flat bank to the waters edge. He turns right and can see the massive stadium and bleachers carved right into the cliff side. He notices some large pillars set up in a clear field leading out into the ocean, assuming it must be for one of the games. Dragons cling to the cliff side while a few stand on the ground next to their riders while they talked with other racers.

Hisaki glides to a graceful stop near the entrance of the stadium. A girl with ski slope nose eyes him from behind a stone counter. Aiven hops off Hisaki and walks up to her, “Is there where I sign up for the games?” The girl roles her eyes, “This your first time?” Aiven slowly nods. The girl stands up, “Thought so, lets take a look at your dragon.” She picks up some paper work and carries it with her as she walks around the counter and over to Hisaki.

She begins examining him and marking things on the paper while making comments, “Four legs I see, doesn’t seem very aerodynamic.” Aiven gives her a dirty look but she does notice. She taps at Hisaki’s harness, “Doesn’t even have a real saddle, what is this even?” Aiven begins to explain but she waves him off. Aiven looks at Hisaki with a can you believe her look. The girl walks back around her counter and finishes filling out the papers. “Just sign your name her and your dragons below.” She says as she taps the paper. Aiven takes the quill from her and signs it as she reaches below her counter.

She pulls out a thick leather bracelet with a 4 on it and hands it to him, “Beginner, you must wear this at all times as proof as a game contestant.” Hisaki takes off running and up into the air. The girl stares at Hisaki disappear behind the stadium out of view. Aiven doesn’t even notice as he talks to the girl, “Beginner? Can’t I try out for a hire level.” “Well your dragon just took off with out you, so I think beginner the right level for you. If you really think you’re better you can move up by proving it to the judges by winning.”

Aiven backs up from the counter as he talks, “So just have to win? That’s all I have to do?” He keeps backing up further creating a great amount of distance, “Beginner, thanks I guess these will be some easy wins.” Hisaki swoops down at a barely visible speed; Aiven grabs hold of the harness and is picked up into the air by Hisaki. The girl races an eyebrow unsure of what just happened.

A young brunette girl is sweeping some steps outside the Racer’s accommodation. A tap on her shoulder startles her and she turns around to see Aiven smiling down at her. “Is this the accommodation?” He asks. She leans the broom against the wall, “Yes you’re a racer?” Aiven nods and shows his bracelet. The girl motions her to follow her, “This way, I’m Beth I run the whole building with my family.”

Aiven follows her into the office; he stops at the desk as she walks around it. “So what size room are you looking for?” Aiven looks back out the door then back at Beth, “Do you have one big enough for a dragon?” Beth looks at him weird, “There’s two, but we’d have to remove the furniture. Do you have enough money for a room big enough for a dragon?” Aiven shrugs, “Can I do a I owe you and pay you after the games?” Beth leans on the counter eyeing him, “Yes you can pay after the games. But if you cannot fork up the money we will have no choice but to force you to work off you payment. And with the cost of the room and maybe essentials like a bath, and the hourly wages you will be working here until,” Beth pretends to do the math in her head, “Until you are old and grey.”

“Guess I can agree to those terms, if I don’t win I’m gonna need to find a job anyways.” Aiven smirks. “And you said something about a bath?” Beth rolls her eyes, “Let me guess you’re going to ask If there is a bath big enough for a dragon.” Aiven nods, “You know me so well.”

Beth leads Aiven with Hisaki trailing behind around to the back of the accommodation to the bathhouse. Beth pulls open the large doors revealing a in ground tub. “There are different size bath houses, some private and some public. This is the one to wash your dragon. Which I think you both need, since the opening ceremony is pretty much a beauty contest.” Aiven and Hisaki walk into the bath house as the listen to Beth continue, “So to work it, you buy a token in the front office which I will give to you, that will allow you to turn the water on. If you want I can start it up for you and put it on your tab.” “Yeah thank you” Aiven replies as he sets his stuff on some tables in the corner. “Have your dragon get in first so it wont over flow the water.” Beth tells Aiven. Aiven nods at Hisaki who steps down into the large bath. Beth walks over to where you insert the token and pulls a lever causing a spout to fall from the wall. Hot water begins to pour out filling the tub. Beth turns to Aiven, “When the tub is full just take the token out and pull the lever again, it will stop the water.” Aiven gives his gratitude as she leaves and closes the bath doors. Aiven turns to Hisaki, “Now this is what I call a bath.”

Aiven looks down at his key with a room number tied to it, and looks up at the number above the door, “This must be it” Aiven opens the wide door and steps into the large empty room containing of only a bed. Hisaki ducks his head and attempts to squeeze himself through the door way busting the walls. Aiven looks back, “Guess they’ll put that on our tab too.”

Aiven pulls the mattress of the bedframe and onto the floor Hisaki taking up most of the room lifts up his wing allowing Aiven to pull the mattress underneath. He takes the sheet and ties it to the broken frame, before lying down on the mattress next to Hisaki.

A week later Aiven stands in the stadium tunnel waiting for the cue to let the beginner racers know when to walk out into the arena. One by one contestant have their name called and walk out to the middle Where they blow a whistle with a distinct tune and their dragon comes flying in, some adding a spin or a low fly over the peoples head to add style.

Aiven stands next in line; his palms become sweaty with nervousness. He hears his name shouted through the megaphone along with Hisaki’s and saying he was from the small town over the mountain. He slowly walks to the center he sees the high walls surrounding him leading up to the seating filled with an ocean of people. Each person blending in with the other, he stares up at the faceless crowd watching his every move.

A few people start to whisper, “He looks nervous.” “Did he forget his whistle?” “He’s not calling for his dragon.”

Aiven puts his hand up and motions to come towards him. Hisaki appears at the top of the stadium seating before leaping down the bleachers and landing in the arena sliding to a halt beside Aiven. Hisaki spreads his wings up and spreads out his tail to show off his feathers.

The crowd gasps and begins to mutter to each other as Aiven grabs hold of Hisaki’s harness and hangs on while Hisaki walks over to stand by the other racers.

A elderly man sitting high in the stands says out loud, “Hump four legs and feathers? Not much of a racing dragon.” Bernard who is sitting beside him along with some of the other towns people over hears him, “You say that now, but his wings are slicker and can beat faster, the feathers on his tail probably help balance and make sharper turns than spikes are able to do. You now like a falcon.” The old man argues back, “But what about those un-needed front legs? What do you got to say about that?” Bernard sits back then replies, “Hmmm looks like that thing can use that leg power to have extra push when leaving a cliff side or can also get running starts from ground take offs. If I was betting I would go all in for that dragon.” The old man eyes him and looks back down at his listing of racers re-reading Aiven’s names.

“And those are our \_\_\_th Dragon Games beginner riders!” The announcers says as the crowds begin to clap and cheer. Aiven looks around at the twenty or so other beginner riders that he will soon be racing and wonders what brought each of them here. Was it the fame? Was it the money? Was it to prove something? Or was it just the love of riding?

The citizens crowd the surrounding land outside of stadium where a small festival is set up in honor of the games starting. “Aiven!” Bernard shouts across the way. Aiven turns around to see the people from the village, “Hey you guys made it!” Aiven says happily. Bernard pulls Aiven in for a hug, “We wouldn’t miss one of our honorary family member on his big day, you nervous for your first race?”

Aiven pulls away from the hug, “Yeah its first thing tomorrow morning. I’ve never been in an official race before, kind of nerve wracking.” “Don’t worry to much about it you’ll do great and hey if not there’s always next year.” Bernard reinsures him.

Aiven and the town’s people begin walking around the festival together talking about whatever comes to mind as if he has lived with them his whole life. Aiven turns the corner around some booths and a man with slick black hair and a face all the woman fall for, shoulder checks him. Aiven stumbles back a little and looks at the man who scoffs, “Watch where you’re going feather dragon.” Before continuing on his way.

Aiven turns to Bernard and asks, “Who does he think he is.” “That my good boy is Quilan, he is the star athlete at these games. His family as been racing in the elite ranks since these games were founded.” Bernard whispers. “So he was pretty much born in to the racing profession.” Aiven states. Bernard’s wife buts in, “But that does make him better than the others, Aiven. Anyone can be a racer if they work hard enough.” Aiven nods in agreement, “Yeah, guess we just got to show them.”

The next morning the beginner racers stand in a line at the top of a cliff over looking where the games are held. Aiven looks down at the pillars lining the track reaching out to the single on in the sea. 5 laps is all Aiven has to do and he’s done, fly out to the farthest pillar and back and repeat.

He looks over at the other racers and their dragons. He analyzes the advanced saddles strapped to their dragons and the supposedly special clothing worn by the riders. The rider next to him in line pulls on his gloves, as he looks Aiven up and down. He laughs at his battered clothing and handmade harness before climbing upon his dragon.

Hisaki lowers his head near Aiven who encourages him, “Don’t worry about them and their fancy equipment. At least you aren’t carrying unneeded weight and have full motion of your wings.” Hisaki lowers himself down to allow Aiven to climb up and hook his harness on.

Aiven’s heart skips when he hears the announcer yell, “Racers take your places.” Thump, thump, is all Aiven is able to hear, his heart pounding in his chest. He has only raced Kisa his entire life, now he is up against twenty or so other riders who he has never seen ride before. Aiven swallows feeling the lump stuck in his throat. He remembers the way the would race as if they were the only two on the island. It was not for winning but for the joy of being together, bonding over a love they both shared. Hisaki positions himself on the edge just like he’s done a million times, trying to ignore the nerves being shared with Aiven.

Bang! The gun goes off and all the racers leap from the edge leaving behind Aiven and Hisaki. Who had become frozen at the unfamiliar sound. Aiven comes to and sees the other racers already making their way down the cliff side gaining speed. Last place is not an option in his mind. The two of them take off from the ledge with such force chunks fall off tumbling down after them.

Aiven and Hisaki wait till last minute before pulling up as always and glide lower than the other racers. Hisaki olds the glide his wings pulled in making himself for aerodynamic as the pass below the riders one by one. With a heavy thrust Hisaki beats his wings pulling himself and in line with the other riders.

10, Aiven counts the riders in front of him, he’s already passed about half of them. They are coming over the water, Aiven eyes the last pillar jutting out from the deep water. The other riders turn their dragon’s side ways in attempt to take the turn as sharp as they can. Aiven has a different trick up his sleeve. Hisaki heads straight for the pillar and uses his front legs to stop and turn himself around and his back legs and wings to launch himself off the pillar at a high speed, passing 3 of the other racers in the process.

“That’s illegal!” A citizen complains to the ref. The ref holds up his handbook, “It says they must reach the last pillar before turning around. Touching the pillar counts as reaching it.” The unsatisfied citizen grunts as he storms back into the crowd.

7 riders in front of him, 6, 5, 4, 3. Aiven passes another rider putting himself in 2nd place with still 4 laps to go. Aiven grins as he over takes the rider in first with ease. “Beginner, we’ll show them they were wrong.” Aiven thinks to himself and Hisaki who just because he can picks up his speed beginning to lap the racers in last.

The fans’ jaws drop as they watch Aiven take lap each and every racer before crossing the finish line. Bernard and the other towns people cheer, “Now that’s what you call a racer!”

Aiven and Hisaki stand side by side at the finish line with the racers who came in 2nd and 3rd next to them. Aiven smiles and waives as they put his medal around his neck and hand him a small bag of his winnings.

Aiven pours and handful of coins into his hand and shoves it into his pocket as he walks over to his friends. He tosses the bag to Bernard who barely catches it as he was caught off guard, “For the town.” Bernard’s wife hugs Aiven, “You were amazing up there, you’ve got quite a gift you know.” “But you did give us quite a scare in the beginning though.” Bernard admits. Aiven scratches his head, “I told you I was nervous.” Bernard waves it off, “I’m just messing with you, we’re grateful for everything you’re doing for us.” Aiven shrugs, “What are friends for.”

Aiven’s father pulls a freshly baked bread of the oven as he hears a loud pounding coming from the front door. “Coming!” He shouts as he sets the bread to cool on the counter. “Now you can that be, we’re closed at this hour.” He mutters as he shuffles towards the door. He opens it up to be face to face with two dragon riders in their military uniforms. “May I help you?” His father asks.

“We are still on the search for your son, the fugitive Aiven. We are here to find out if you know anything about his where about.” His father shakes his head, “I told your men before I haven’t seen or heard from him since the day of his disappearance, he did not tell mention where he was going or that he was leaving at all. You can search my house again. There is no evidence of his location here. Now I have a business to run so I don’t have time to answer questions about my criminal son.” The Dragon Riders eye the old man, “If he does try to contact you, you will inform us. By law or you will be arrested along side him for with holding important government information. Have a nice night sir.” Aiven’s father closes the door with out responding, and shakes his head. “Aiven better be making something of himself out there. Make all this trouble worth it.”

Kisa stands at the camp with the rest of her patrol in the mountains just behind the large port city. “Sir, we have searched all up and down these mountains, the suspect is no where to be found.” Another Rider announces to the sergeant. “We are going to split our team to search farther into the land. A third will stay at post to patrol the mountains, then another will search north and the last south.” Kisa who is eaves dropping steps up to put in her input, “South Sir? What about East?” “East?” He asks. “Yes, as a citizen the same age as him we have never once learned about the south, since we are not in relations with that empire. East and North are the only empires semi familiar to us from our schooling. We would not stray somewhere so unknown. Personally I would already be scared on my own and stick to where I am comfortable.” Kisa replies. The sergeant takes it in for a second, “You make a valid point Kisa, I don’t need to disperse my men over such a vast amount of land. Glad to have you in my section.” Kisa smiles and bows, “Thank you Sir, its my pleasure to help to help out my country.”

Kisa slowly walks away as she remembers to herself something Aiven had told her a year ago. They were roasting some fish they had caught over a fire in the secret cave. Aiven was checking the fish as Kisa brought up the question, “If you could just fly any where, where would you go?”

Aiven sits back from the fire and ponders for a moment before looking up and speaking to the ceiling as if he could see the stars themselves, “The southern countries.” “The southern countries? Why?” Kisa asks as she watches him begin to dream. Aiven smiles, “It’s so mysterious, we never learned about them, I barely even know any of their names. I want to know what the people are like. How are they raised? What do they do for fun? Do they get to choose what they want to be when they grow up or is it decided for them at birth?”

Back in the present Kisa whispers to herself, “Did you get to meet them? Was this all worth it, you selfish moron.”

“Ah man this was so worth it,” Aiven says as he watches the trick competition wearing his new advanced placement bracelet after moving up divisions over the past 2 weeks, winning every contest he was entered in. Spiral after spiral, flip after flip riders show off tricks they have been practicing all year for. But even in the advanced placement the tricks had no originality.

Aiven steps to the edge of the pier, the crowd goes wild as he turns to wave at them. Rising so quickly in ranking his name was talk of the town. The girls screamed after him, all wanting to get close to their new heartthrob.

Aiven tunes out the crowd and tries to remember the routine he made up last night. He tightens the strap on his body harness as he readies himself. Aiven reaches up just has Hisaki flies down turn himself upside down right above Aiven allowing him to grab hold of the harness before turning right side up again. Aiven uses the momentum to hoist himself on to Hisaki’s back and buckles himself on the harness as the fly out above the ocean. “Alright lets show these people what kind of dragon you are.”

They fly straight towards the sky, climbing higher and higher. After they reach the designated height, Hisaki loosens his wings letting them drop to his side. They fall backwards, aiming head first towards the water. The crowd watches silently as they quickly start to close the gab between them and the water.

At the last minute Hisaki spreads his wings catching themselves and pushes himself forward grazing the water as he breathes his fire down at it. Thick amount of steam rises from the surface engulfing them. The crowd leans forward in their seats in excitement trying to spot them through the wall of steam. A blast of fire cuts through the middle of the wall and Aiven and Hisaki come spiraling through it. The crowd goes crazy as they land on the pier and bow in sync. Quilan sits in the VIP seating un-amused by Aiven’s performance, one of the other elite racers leans over to him, “Fire man, did you see that, it breathed Fire! Where do I find a dragon like that?” Quilan leans back in his seat and crosses his legs, “That’s not a species you can stumble upon easily.”

Later that night a small group of girls tip toe around the rider accommodation whispering, “I think its this way, one of the far rooms.” “Oh here it’s the one with the busted door.” They sneak up and pile around the doorway partially covered by a sheet and peer inside. “Awwwww look at him.” The girls say in unison as they see Aiven sound asleep beside Hisaki. “No other rider has had such a bond with their dragon. He’s got to be the best rider ever.” “Not better than Quilan” “Uh huh” “Ssshhh you’ll wake him.” Aiven stirs in his sleep causing the girls to take off running while giggling.

The next morning Aiven stands in in the arena with the 10 other advanced placement racers. A large amount of netting as been set up around the bleachers protecting the audience. Canons are set up along the bottom of the arena and above the bleachers. “I’ve never lost this game my entire career.” The racer next to Aiven announces to him. “Yeah? Is it fun?” Aiven asks. The racer smirks, “It one of the hardest games, you might be oh so good at racing but this is my turf child.” Aiven nonchalantly replies, “Hisaki and I literally think as one when we ride. We have one brain with 2 sets of eyes able to see in different directions. You are two separate brains with one pair of eyes and one brain has to worry about controlling the other one. Think about it.”

The referee tells all the riders to get ready and the game will begin at the blow of his whistle. Hisaki shifts in anticipation as they both wait for the whistle. There it is the sound sending the riders lifting off the ground, soaring into the air.

The first canon goes off shooting a ball full of colored powder into the sky at the riders. Each one of them dodges it as the other canons begin going off, not just one after another but some at the same time. Aiven and Hisaki have no problem spinning and dodging the color blasts. A color blast hits a rider near by, exploding in yellow dust. The crowd reacts in mixed emotions as the colors rain down upon them. A purple ball comes flying at the two of them from behind, Aiven turns around just in time to see it, and Hisaki reacts immediately and drops a few feet in the sky. The ball flies over them and hits another rider passing by cutting him out of the game.

“WOOOOO YEAH, This is what I call a game!” Aiven shouts with glee. Aiven can’t pull the smile from his face as he feels the rush in his veins. Hisaki suddenly halts in the air to letting a color blast speed by them. Hisaki scans for the color blasts as Aiven looks around for the other riders, “Guess it’s just down to us two.” From the other side of the arena the rider from earlier glares at Aiven.

At that moment 3 different color blasts fly at Aiven and Hisaki from different directions. They make a quick decision and spin upward just in time dodging the balls that hit each other exploding below them. The rainbow hands rise up as they go ballistic at Aiven’s actions. The wind carries the colored powder painting the cheering crowd.

The canons begin to go off twice as much now that there is only 2 contestants left. Aiven barely gets to blink as they dodge blast after blast flying from all different directions. Then out of the corner of his eye he sees it, the orange dust floating through the air. The blasts have seized and the crowd is going wild cheering his name. They slowly lower and land in the middle of the arena next to the other rider who is covered in orange.   
 Aiven unhooks himself and slides off Hisaki. He sticks his hand out to shake, “Good game!” Aiven says happily. The other rider looks at him in disgust, “Tsk, trying to rub it in?” Aiven is taking back, “No it’s not about winning, it’s about doing what I love and having fun.” The other rider turns away ignoring him, Aiven becomes annoyed, “Well guess there’s always a first for everything, my first game, my first win and your first loss. Fine memories we’ve made here aren’t they.” Aiven laughs to himself

A Dragon Rider kneels before the King of \_\_\_\_, “Sire, We have been searching for almost three weeks now. We have no leads on the fugitive.” The king breaths out a heavy sigh, “We must not let the citizens know about his escape,” “Yes sire.” “We will announce his death was during capture, the citizens must not know the truth.” “Yes sire” “Choose only a select few Riders to continue the search in secret.”

The Town Crier walks down to the stage in the lower class shops, the bell ringing in Aiven’s father’s ears. “Oyez Oyez!” the Crier shouts. Aiven’s father turns to listen as he begins to announce the news. “Fugitive Aiven \_\_\_ found yesterday in the northern mountains, was pronounced dead at the scene, while resisting arrest. His body is now in the militaries custody.”

Aiven’s father’s heart skips a beat. He wobbles a little where he is standing as the Crier steps down from his platform and makes his way towards his next location. His father over hears some woman chatting, “That poor boy.” “Poor boy? He’s the one and went and broke the rules.” “He was brave enough to go for his dreams, didn’t you ever have a dream?” “Well I’ve always wanted to learn how to paint.” “Yeah? I’ve always wanted to be a teacher.”

Aiven’s father shuffles across the small room in the house a pulls open a loose board from the wall. He reaches inside and pulls out an old guitar case and gently setting in on the floor. He ignores the years of dust caked on and unlatches the hooks lifting the cover open. He smiles down at the still intact guitar.

The citizens in Azadgaon crowd around a stage as an interviewer speaks, “Our first guest is everyone’s new favorite, one of the youngest to rise so quickly in ranking and to rise so quickly in our hearts, everyone here’s Aiven! The crowd cheers while fan girls scream his name.

Aiven shyly walks out onto the stage smiling out at the crowd. He sits on the chair next to the host. Who turns to him and asks his first question, “Aiven, what is it like to have been promoted to Elite level during your first ever annual games.” Aiven replies, “It’s really surreal, sometimes I think this is all a dream.” “Did you ever think that you would be standing here today with all those medals.” The host asks. Aiven pauses for a moment, “No, this is farther than I ever could of imagined.” The host nods, “So what made you decide to join the races?” Aiven grins, “Cause Hisaki is my best friend and its what we love to do, we had a personally point to prove to not just the people back home but to ourselves.

The Host finishes up Aiven’s questions and they stand up together, “Everyone give a round of applause to Aiven.” The crowd cheers and hollers as Aiven makes his way off the stage. Quilan steps up the stairs as he awaits to be called on, “Nice little answers you got there, practice them in the mirror?” Quilan jokes as Aiven steps around him ignoring him.

Aiven stands behind the stage and listens as Quilan answers his questions. One question and answer stuck out especially to Aiven.

“Do you feel like Aiven be a tough competition for you in the elite race?” The host asks Quilan. “No not at all.” He responds immediately. “Why do you say that?” The host questions. “Because he just stumbled upon racing, I was born and raised into it.” Quilan chuckles, “You can say it’s in my blood.”

This was the day, the last race of the Dragon Games. The 5 elite racers stand at the top of the cliff. The map has been engrained into Aiven’s mind knowing he must hit certain checkpoints on this cross-country course.

Aiven tunes out all noise he prepares himself for the sound of the gunshot. He does take his eyes off the first checkpoint on the highest peak on the island furthest to the right. He can no see it but he imagines the other riders as the shift on their saddles anticipating the gunshot. Their dragon’s claws gripping the ground, holding their balance as they lean over the edge. Ready to push off and dive towards the ground. He can feel Quilan’s glare falling over him like a heavy blanket. He can still hear his words echoing in his head, “*I was born to and raised into it.”* He remembers the last words Kisa had said to him “*I’m sorry but you were not born as a Rider*. *You believe you were born to be something you’re not*.”

“Look me in the eyes and tell me I’m not a true rider.” Aiven says out loud to himself.

Then there it was the sound of the gunshot. Simultaneously the 5 riders leap form the edge and rocket towards the ground. They all pull up at the same time except for Aiven who waits just a second longer than the rest, putting him in third place and Quilan in the lead.

They race out over the open water still holding the same placements pacing themselves over the fast sea. The raise their altitude as they near the islands shore aiming at the first checkpoint. The work sitting upon a small tower wooden marks each one as they soar by him. They barely cut around him with such speed his tower shakes from the wind force.

They pass over the other two islands checkpoints and head just north of the town. Aiven flies easily maintaining his third place, he eyes Quilan who has been pulling further ahead, creating a gap in-between he and the rest of the racers. After the group finishes crossing the ocean, Aiven decides to kick it up a notch. Hisaki picks up his speed and they easily pass the rider in front of them into second place. They begin to close the gap in-between them and Quilan who looks back and sees them gaining on him. “Not today peasant.” Quilan mumbles to himself and he too picks up his speed.

They fly north of the city to pass the 4th checkpoint leading them inland before turning around. They approach the stretch of the course that makes it elite riders only. The group lowers as the canyon grows around them. Sharp walls rise up beside them towering over them as they enter the rock forest. Large rock pillars jut up from the ground just like the canyon back on Aiven’s island.

Quilan enter first with Aiven right as his tail. They swerve around pillar after pillar trying to maintain their speed, but the further they fly the denser it gets. One mistake in judgment will stop your momentum losing your place or worse crashing into the jagged rocks.

They squeeze between tight gaps, and under natural made bridges. Quilan pulls on the reins directing his dragon around the bulky obstacles unable to blink because taking his eyes of the course can cause him to crash at any second. Beads of sweat run down his forehead as he focuses.

Aiven looks over at Quilan whom he has become neck and neck with. Hiskai turns sideways to fit through a gap turning Aiven’s gaze downwards. Then he sees it a shallow river only has deep as Hisaki’s ankles running smoothly through the canyon. Any large rocks that would create obstacles have been corroded away. Hisaki understands exactly what Aiven is thinking and pulls his wings in. They fall towards the ground, Hisaki opens his wings just enough to catch themselves and glide along the water top.

He slowly lowers his legs as he starts to lose speed and begins running. Using both their energy Hisaki sprints down the river catching back up with Quilan. They begin to take the lead as Quilan maneuvers his way around the pillars.

Then they see it the canyon ends the checkpoint proving you stayed in side and a wall. At the bottom of the wall the cave opens up where the river is flowing. “What do you say Hisaki? Find out if goes straight through?” Hisaki responds by powering forward straight into the cave. The worker at the checkpoint spots them and marks them off 1st. Quilan flies full force upwards and out of the canyon.

He smirks as he notices he is the first one out of the canyon, with the last stretch before the finish line just ahead. He looks back as he flies over the thick canyon wall seeing the other riders rise up and over but with Aiven nowhere in site.

Hisaki and Aiven squint as the daylight strikes them. They sprint out of the cave on to the shoreline just in front Quilan. Aiven looks up and smiles as Hisaki leaps into the sky.

Quilan does a double take as Aiven rises up front of him. The two of them giving everything they have as they fly straight for the finish line.

The fans wait eagerly at the finish line. They chatter amongst themselves to pass the time. But everyone grows eerily quiet as they announce the riders approaching. Bernard, his wife and the other towns people stand together as they wait spot the small objects in the sky flying towards them. They shield their eyes from the sun as they try to make out who the riders are.

A flash of dark orange flies past the finish line with a dark dragon right behind him. Everyone is speechless for a moment as Aiven skids to a halt behind the finish line and looks up as the other riders cross over. Then the announcer brings up his megaphone and says, “In first place of the Elite Race is Aiven! Second place we have Quilan! Third place….”

The crowd erupts, confetti is thrown into the air as they jump and cheer. Some of the people in the crowd crumple up their betting slips and toss them on the ground.

Aiven takes his place upon the stand with Quilan and the third place rider beside him. Aiven is holding a large sack of coins and has a large flower reef is hung around his neck along with his gold medal. The games announcer standing in front of them on the stage, “Their you have it folks, the best of the best in the games. Lets hear a round of applause for Aiven our newest champion. I’ve got to admit that boy was born to ride!”

Aiven is taken back by those last words, they replay in his head as he looks out upon the crowd. We watches the hands clap in slow motion over each other’s heads blurring into a choppy sea of faces. He had done it, he had proven that he was meant to ride no matter who his parents were, and no matter what his society labeled him as. He risked everything and set out to accomplish his dreams.

He wonders how things are back at home, He thinks to himself. He thinks about his father and does he feel spiteful towards me would he be proud of me even after the trouble I’ve caused? And Kisa, is she ok? Would she miss him if he settles here in his new home? Or would she carry on?

Aiven steps down the stairs off the stage and goes around the back he tosses the sack towards Bernard who catches with a confused look on his face. “The whole lot”, Aiven says. Bernard holds it out, “I can’t expect this, this is your championship prize.” Aiven nudges it back to him, “It’s for the town. I won more than enough to last me until I’m old, well if I spend it wisely.” Bernard pulls Aiven into a unexpected bear hug, “You are a hero to our town, you really saved us.” Aiven shrugs in Bernard’s arms, “What are friends for.”

3 months later Aiven steps out on to his front porch and looks out at his acre yard. He can see some herders in the distance heading back to \_\_\_\_\_. Aiven sips his ale and head back into his house that he had used some of his winnings to make. He kept it simple even though he could of made flashy. The house contained one large room with a kitchen and dinning room in one of the corners, then a sitting room around the fireplace in the front. To one side there’s a set of stairs leading to a loft with a pile of large cushions beside bookcases and a desk. There is only two doors in the house one led to a closet and the other the bedroom.

Aiven’s bedroom was the only abnormal part of the house. It was bigger than the rest of the house but contained no furniture. Instead it had wood flooring only on the outer rim of the room and a larger lowered square in the middle lined with a soft floor and cushions. The ceiling was vaulted and one of the walls was a wide sliding door.

Hisaki lays asleep in the large lowered bed. “Wake up, I need to go to the market in Azadgaon today” Aiven announces. Hisaki snorts in response. “Don’t give me attitude mister.” Aiven says back as he opens the curtains and then the large sliding door letting in the morning sun. Hisaki flinches at the sun and rises up his head. He yawns before lazily pulling himself up from the bed and stumbles out the door. Aiven grabs his satchel and follows out the door sliding it closed behind him.

The two of them fly back over the mountains to the coastal city. They land just out side the town entrance. Aiven slides of Hisaki, “I’ll call you when I’m done.” Aiven pauses as he listens, “I don’t what you should do while you wait, why don’t you go hang out with the other dragons by the stadium.” Aiven suggest. Hisaki looks over at the stadium then back at Aiven before taking off.

Aiven strolls through the busy market. A few girls giggle and wave at him while others shy away and smile. Aiven walks up to his favorite produce stand, as the merchant greets him graciously, “Mr. Aiven good to see you again, do you need help selecting your usual?” Aiven waves his hand, “No thanks ma’am, I’ve got it.” He picks out his produce and hand the merchant the coins before shoving his purchase into his satchel and taking off.

He pushes his way through the market crowd again, “Aiven, I see you’ve got some torn up shoes, why don’t you come in and check out a new pair?” A merchant says to him. “No thanks sir.” Aiven answers. “Mr. Aiven look what’s on sale today” “Mr. Aiven” “Aiven.” Aiven turns down merchant after merchant as he walks.

Some old women watch him as he comes up to a stand with roasted corn on the cob. “It’s so nice to see such and Elite Racer shopping down here with the common folk.” One whispers. “Yeah even if he is constantly hassled by everyone, look the poor by can’t even eat in peace.” The other whispers back motioning over to Aiven who his sitting on a wall with his corn as two girls over him.

“We’re like your biggest fans.” The girls say. “We went to all of your races and games.” “Wow, I’m um happy to hear that.” Aiven nervously responds. “It’s so cool that you shop here.” Yeah so cool” “The other elite racers never come down here.” “ Yeah never” “But you’re not like them, you used to be like us right?” They say. Aiven fumbles with his corn as he remembers the island he grew up on, “Yeah I used to be just like you.” Aiven stands up and turns to the two girls, “It was nice meeting you ladies, but I’ve got an engagement I need to attend.”

Aiven walks over to the stands and holds his corn in his mouth and he climbs up the sides of the buildings to the rooftops. “He so awesome.” The girls squeal.

Aiven takes his corn back out of his mouth and runs a long the top of the buildings and climbs up to one of the highest roofs in the market. He lays back basking in the sun and eats in silence.

Kisa soars through the sky as she looks down upon the unfamiliar land. She can see the ocean just over the mountains showing she has flown as far south as she can. She looks sees a small town nestled in the valley as she flies over the mountain towards the sea.

Kisa is over taken as she gazes upon not just a city stretching from the mountains to the ocean but a large stadium sitting just outside of it. Dragons fly aimlessly around the old race grounds. “Dragons?” She mutters to herself in disbelief.

That’s when she spots him, a dark orange dragon, his feathers shining in the sun. Kisa’s heart skips a beat, “Aiven.” She lands her dragon outside the town entrance, “Keep an eye on Hisaki, and don’t let him notice you ok?” Kisa turns from her dragon and walks into town as it takes off.

Kisa wanders around the town disoriented, overwhelmed from the amount of people. “This is hopeless” She gripes, “This town is massive” *Maybe some ones heard of him*, she thinks to herself, *He does have a dragon out there.*

Kisa walks up to a group of young girls standing at a merchandise stand, “Excuse me, have you seen the boy that flies the orange dragon out there, he has brown hair, green eyes.” “You mean Aiven?” The shorter girl interrupts. Kisa goes blank for a moment, “You know him? Have you seen him?” “Who doesn’t know him, No I wish I’ve seen him?” The taller girl states. Kisa stares at the girls perplexed. “He famous why wouldn’t we.” The shorter girl adds and motions to the stand behind them. Kisa pushes past them and looks at the Dragon Racer merchandise, from racing gloves and toy dragons up to hand drawn posters. She looks at the back wall with 5 large posters hanging up. The orange one especially catches her eye. The words **Natural Born Rider** printed at the top above a drawing of Aiven and Hisaki.

Aiven lies half asleep on the rooftop, before he is awaken by Hisaki’s thoughts. He sits up suddenly, “Kisas here!” Aiven pushes himself up off the ground stumbling to balance himself as he begins to run across the roof tops.

He scans the pedestrians below him as he jumps from roof to roof. He gracefully drops off a ledge landing on top of a flower stand. He grabs the awning and swings himself down into the shop.

“Aiven! You nearly gave this old woman a heart attack.” The florist exclaims. “I need some flowers for a girl.” Aiven explains. “For a girl! Some lucky girl caught your eye?” The florist teases. Aiven blushes, “No no, its more like an apology.” The florist frowns, “Tsk, what did you do to the poor girl.” Aiven scratches his head, “It’s a long story”, he says as the florist picks up some flowers making a bouquet. She comes back and hands it to him, “Here its on the house.” “What no, ma’am let me pay.” Aiven insists as he pulls a coin out of his pocket. “No, it’s just nice to see a young man try and make up for being a complete idiot.” The florist responds. Aiven sets the coin on the stand before jumping up to grab hold of the awning and pulling himself up on to it.

Kisa walks down the busy market asking random people if they’ve see Aiven. All reply as if she was just another fan girl. Kisa sees a produce stand with one of Aiven’s favorite fruit, which is uncommonly liked by other people for its bitter taste. Kisa walks up to the merchant, “Excuse me? Have you seen Aiven?” The merchant eyes her, “Yes, why does it concern you?” “I’m a old friend of his and I’m trying to find him.” Kisa asks. “Yeah you and every other girl in this city” She responds abrasively.

Kisa says in a sincere tone, “I’m serious ma’am, I’ve been searching for him since he ran away for his home town.” The merchant drops her guard, “You can’t be her” Kisa doesn’t quite hear her, “Excuse me?” She asks. “I saw him earlier today, he tends to hang out around this market. I can’t guarantee he is still here though.” The merchant gently explains to Kisa. “Thank you” Kisa says honest tone before she disappears into the crowd again.

Aiven stands on the roofs still scanning the crowds. Then out of the corner of his eye he catches a glimpse of a long blonde ponytail blow in the wind.

Kisa continues further up the market, this area is a lot less crowded and more dispersed shops. “Oh my god its Aiven!” Kisa hears a girl shout. “Awww look at him, who are they for!” She hears another one whine. Kisa turns around slowly the wind blowing her hair across her face. There standing in front of her is Aiven with his stupid grin. She stares at him in disbelief, her mouth slightly gaping.

Aiven pops his jaw, he is face to face with his best friend for years but can not come up with any words to say. He nervously holds out the flowers and spits out, “I’m sorry.”

All the girls that were near by are now watching intently as Aiven holds out the flowers. Kisa looks down at them first with rejoice but she quickly burrows her brows and slaps the flowers from his hands. The girls watching gasp in unison as they watch Aiven’s hand drop back to his side as the flowers fall to the ground.

“I’ve been searching for you for months and I find you just here living it up in fame!? I’ve been worried sick that something bad might have happened to you!” Kisa argues. Aiven looks down at his feet, “I know, I just had to prove then I got caught up in…wait did you say you searched for me this whole time?” He looks back up at her locking eyes before she turns her head away. “It’s not like it’s a big deal or anything. I mostly did it cause it was my job requirement.”

Aiven pulls her into a hug, “It’s good to see you again.” She hugs him back, “It’s good to see you too.” Some of the girls groan at their loss of chances while others gawk at the two of the.

Aiven takes Kisa’s hand, “Do you trust me?” He asks. Kisa replies, “You know I do.” Aiven pulls her as he runs towards a short wall with a high drop over looking a lower part of town. He leaps from it still holding onto Kisa. The fan girls run to the edge and look over as they see Hisaki catch both of them barely skimming the tops of the lower market. “Wow did you see that!” One girl yells in excitement. “I wish I was her”, another announces in jealousy.

“You just love that move don’t you.” Kisa points out as she clings to Aiven as Hisaki carries them up into the sky. Kisa picks up her whistle around her neck and blows it calling her dragon. “You’re not the only one that has a dragon that can catch them, I’ll follow you.” Kisa lets go of Aiven and sliding down Hisaki’s back falling off near his tail. Aiven looks down below them and sees Kisa on top of her beige dragon below them.

Kisa follows Aiven back over the top of the mountains she looks down at the small town she had passed over early that day. They land in front of a house sitting the furthest from town. “Well here we are.” Aiven announces before hoping off Hisaki’s back. Kisa walks up next to him, “We are were exactly?” Aiven begins walking up towards his front porch, “My house of course.” Kisa follows him up the porch steps and through the front door.

Kisa looks around at the small house, “Huh, for being Mr. famous I expected you to have more money now.” Aiven takes his produce out of his satchel setting it in the kitchen. He looks up at Kisa confused, “Huh, oh yeah that. I’m just conserving my money. I didn’t need a large house for just myself. I also gave most of my winnings to the town here. But I still got enough to last about ten years if I spend it wisely.” Kisa nods her head as if she understands, “Wait…What!”

Aiven spends the rest of the evening telling her about how after he ran he flew straight until landing here, and how the towns people took him in as one of their own. He described the games to her and how dragons don’t pick their rider; the racers go and catch them or pay for them. He tells her how he started as the rookie every one laughed at cause he was different and he was just some commoner. But he won every game he entered and became and elite member, so now everyone has seen his potential and love him for fighting to the top even though the odds were against him.

The sun has almost vanished behind the mountains as Kisa leans back on the sofa while Aiven gets up to light the fire place. She stares at the vaulted ceiling as she takes in his whole story. Aiven prods the embers getting the fire to spread over the wood, “How is every thing back in \_\_\_\_” he asks while still staring into the fire pit. Kisa sits back up, “Do you want the honest truth? Or do you just want to hear that everything is fine.”

Aiven stands up and turns to her and I a stern voice questions, “What do you mean by that?” Kisa plays with a feather poking out of one of the cushions, “Where do I start, Um well the life for the people was staying the same while all the riders were on a hunt for you, but people started to question on if you escaped and had run free from your crime.” Aiven sits down next to her on the couch and listens as she talk, “The King couldn’t accept his loss and lied to the people saying you were killed.” Aiven’s mind go straight to his father now alone in the bakery. Kisa continues, “People started seeing you as an inspiration for following your dreams no matter what the outcome because it what your heart told you to do. The King was not happy with that he was furious people were trying talents or learn other jobs that were not prescribed to them. He has thrown countless amount of citizens in jail and a few have been put to death for resisting. He now has riders on constant surveillance over the city.”

Aiven cannot believe what he had just heard. As he was having the best months of his life he was the soul cause of the downfall of his people back home, “I didn’t mean for that to happen.” He admits. Kisa tries to reassure him she puts her hand on his shoulder, “It’s not your fault, you could never have predicted that.” Aiven looks at her hand, the comforting touch that only she possessed, the touch he hasn’t realized but has missed for so many months.

Aiven leans his head into his hands, staring at his feet while he thinks. He has a sudden realization he arches up and looks at Kisa, “How did you find me? Do the other riders know where you are?” Aiven scoots slightly away from her on the couch as he stares at her alarmed. “I just remembered that you said if you could go anywhere you’d go south. And you’re as south as you can get.” “And the other riders” Aiven asks with his red flag still up. “They don’t know where I am, I was on the search crew but I’ve been MIA for about two weeks now.” Aiven is stunned, “You miss prodigy have run away from your military duties?” “You don’t have to looked so shocked. I’m not miss good toe shoes you know, I did sneak out and hang with you for 4 years.” Kisa says defensively.

“You do make a point there” Aiven admits as he stands up and heads towards the kitchen. “You hungry?” Aiven asks as he pulls a large pot from the cupboards. “I don’t really have anything fancy like they would back at your home.” Aiven rambles off. “No no, it’s fine I don’t want to intrude, you weren’t expecting me,” Kisa refuses. “Nonsense, I’m ecstatic to have you here. You are my second oldest friend.” Aiven says as he fills the pot with some water from a barrel. He starts to drop ingredients in it to make stew as he admits, “ Honestly when Hisaki said that you were here, I thought I was dreaming. I had just come to accept the fact that I may never see you again.”

Aiven lifts the heavy pot and carries it over to the fireplace. Kisa looks away towards the window to hide her blushing face. Aiven kneels in front of the fireplace and hangs the pot on the hanger inside. He brushes his knees off as he stands back off, “I made some bread yesterday if you want some to snack on.” Aiven mentions. “You made?” Kisa questions. Aiven lifts up his sleeve showing his scarred tattoo, “I am a baker’s son” He says with a chuckle.

After dinner Kisa helps Aiven clean up the dishes brining them over into the kitchen, she yawns as she sets done the bowls. “Do you have sleep wear?” Aiven asks. “Why?” Kisa says guilty. “Well I don’t think it will be very comfortable to sleep in your rider uniform.” Aiven brings up. Kisa slumps and hangs her head mumbling, “I lrsstts my bbrrbg” Aiven leans in to hear her better, “What did you say?” “I lsts my bg”, Kisa mumbles again. “Ok ok one more time I can’t understand you.” Aiven teases. “I lost my bag” Kisa says short of a shout, “I lost it a few days ago, you happy?” she stubbornly says.

Aiven grins at her frustration “Yes I am”, he answers. “One second,” Aiven says as he motions to Kisa to stay. He swiftly walks into his room and returns with a nightshirt. He holds it out to Kisa, “Here.” Kisa stares at it with no response. “It’s for you to sleep in.” Aiven explains. Kisa shyly takes it from his hand and holds it against her. Aiven motions her to follow him, “I’ll show you where you can sleep.”

He leads her up the staircase to the loft and stands in front of the heap of cushions. Aiven scratches his head, “It’s not really much of a bed but it’s a lot softer than the couch.” Aiven points out. “Oh and here.” Aiven says as he walks over to a cabinet at the far side of the loft and pulls out some blankets bringing them back over to Kisa. He awkwardly hands them to her, “Well I’m actually going to go into town before it gets any later, I have to talk to a friend of mine here.” Kisa sleepily nods her head understanding. “Good night”

“Good night”, Aiven tells her before walking down the stairs in a pretended calm emotion; his heart pounding in his chest while his face shows nothing. Once he gets to the bottom of the stairs he heads straight for the door not even bothering to grab his satchel or jacket.

He quietly closes the front door after existing and leaps off the front porch and sprints towards town.

Aiven slows to a jog as he enters the town market, heading straight for the pub. He slows to a steady pace as he reaches the entrance and he strolls inside non-chalant. Aiven scans the busy room full of the hard working men around town, letting loose after a days work. Aiven spots Bernard and b-lines for him across the pub. “Guess who showed up out of nowhere today” Aiven says eagerly appearing in front of Bernard leaning over his table towards him.

Bernard sits back and sips his beer as he searches his mind of possible names. Bernard shrugs, “I give up, who?” Aiven sits down in the chair across from him. “Kisa.” Aiven blurts out. “Kisa, your friend from your home country?” Bernard identifies for himself. “Yeah, I can’t believe it!” Aiven says hardly able to control himself.

“Huh you don’t say. How did she even find you?” Bernard inquires. “She was first on my countries search team and she led them in the opposite direction than where she knew I would of gone.” Aiven comments back. Bernard only nods as he listens to Aiven fisnish, “Then about two weeks ago she had run away and flew south knowing that’s where I said I always wanted to go.”

“This girl must have some strong feelings for you.” Bernard mentions. Aiven becomes flustered, “What why do you say that.” “Well look what she’s done for you.” Bernard says for example. Aiven shakes his head in embarrassment, “No no. Were just friends she’s a prodigy and famous in our country I was just some commoner.” “Was, you were just a commoner. You’re a prodigy and are famous here. And so what if she is at a higher status than you. Love has no boundaries, and wasn’t it you that taught everyone that it doesn’t matter where you come from but instead you make yourself out to be?” Bernard pauses for a moment and has a sudden realization, “Wait, she doesn’t have any other Riders trailer he right? She didn’t accidentally lead any of them here?” Aiven looks at him shocked, “No, she just said she went MIA 2 weeks ago. She’s pretty stealthy so I highly doubt they were able to track her.” “Well bring her by tomorrow and lets us take a gander at her.”

Kisa wraps the thick blanket around her as she sinks into the feather stuffed cushions. She looks around the heavy shadowed room as the last of the fire burns down to embers. She smiles to herself as she closes her tired eyes.

She wakes up to the bright sun casting down from a skylight in the middle of the loft. She stirs in her blankets for a moment as she looks around the room trying to remember where she was. It suddenly comes back to her as she untangles her self from the blankets and pushing her self up and off the cushions. She leans over the railing, a smile creeps along her face as she looks down at Aiven who is throwing some wood on the fire.

She gracefully trots down the stairs to the main part of the house, “Good morning” she says. Aiven turns to look at her from the fire place but becomes stunned as he stares focused on her wearing just his shirt, how it reaches down to just above her knees. The way it flows down her petite body. “Good, Good morning.” Aiven is able to spit out. Kisa pulls down at his shirt slightly embarrassed, “So what are you plans for today.” Aiven replies “Were actually going to go over to my friends house for breakfast if that’s ok with you?”  
“Oh?” Kisa says intrigued. “Yeah they are actually really excited to meet you.” Aiven responds. “I should probably get changed then.” Kisa suggest as she turns back to the staircase. She holds down the shirt has she runs back up the stairs.

Kisa skips back down the stairs in her dragon rider uniform and looks around the empty room, “Now where did that boy go?” she wonders to herself. She sees one of the two doors in the house slightly ajar. She tip toes over to it and peeks through the crack. She shakes her head feeling slightly confounded at Aiven’s bizarre ways. She opens the door and steps into the large bedroom. “What are you doing,” she inquires.  
 Aiven looks over at her as he stands on top of Hisaki who is still laying in the oversized bed. “I’m just telling Hisaki that even though we don’t have any work today, he can’t just lay inside all day.” “I always admired your bond with him,” Kisa says appreciative. Aiven hops of Hisaki, “Thanks it’s nothing special, he’s kind of a pain sometime actually.” Aiven tries to down play. Hisaki heard that last comment and scoffs at his remark, Aiven grins down at him showing it was on purpose.

Aiven steps up and out of the bed and walks over to Kisa, “Well lets get going,” Aiven leads her back out the bedroom door but stops right before he closes it and says loud enough for Hisaki to hear, “It’s so nice to get outside and enjoy the day.” Hisaki ignores him and Aiven finally shuts the door closed.

Kisa pats at the messy bumps in her pony tail, “I should of bought another brush.” She says as they walks up to Bernard’s house. “Aw come on you look fine, people here don’t care…some don’t even own brushes.” Aiven mentions trying to boost her self-esteem.

Before Kisa can comment back Bernard and his wife burst out of their front door, “He finally arrives!” Bernard’s voicing booming as his smiles stretches across his furry face, Bernard softens his voice, “And this must be the lovely Kisa I’ve heard so much about.” “Oh you have?” Kisa says intrigued. “Whose hungry I sure am.” Aiven interrupts as he ushers the group to head inside.

Once inside Bernard’s wife motions towards the old wooden table, “Have a seat dears, you too Bernard.” She walks over to the fire place where she has some oatmeal and bacon cooking. The three of them sit on each side of the table,

Bernard leans forward on the table and raises his eyebrow at the two of them who sit uncomfortable under his stare. “Kisa, did you know Aiven is a star athlete here?” Bernard brings up. “Yeah I actually saw some posters of him in the city market.” Kisa recalls. Aiven’s cheeks become flushed as they talk about him. “Yeah he won every game and race he was entered in, a real talented rider.” Bernard tells her. “Yeah I know from experience, I was never able to beat him.” Kisa admits.

Bernard’s wife sets down a bowl of oatmeal for each of them as the talk. “Yeah any lady would be lucky to have him.” Right after Bernard finishes his sentence his Wife bops him on the head. “Leave the children alone”, She demands before heading back to fetch a plate of the bacon.  
 After breakfast Bernard’s wife takes Kisa into the back yard to show her her garden, as she is excited to finally have another female around the house.  
 Aiven and Bernard remain at the table inside sipping some ale. “You know what you should do.” Bernard says to Aiven. “Huh,” Is all Aiven responds. “You should take her on some kind of nice picnic or something” Bernard suggests. Aiven becomes red, “Why why would you suggest that?” “Cause you like her and I think she likes you.” Bernard reveals. Aiven says defensively, “Who says I like her that way.” Bernard shakes his head knowing the truth, “Well you can borrow our picnic basket and if you feel like she doesn’t like you towards the end then you can just play it off as a welcome to the town type of thing, or it can end up being a date.”

Aiven’s heart pounds in his chest, his pre-race jitters were nothing compared to this. “Aw you’ll be fine, with all the things you’ve been through this should be nothing.” Bernard encourages, “Your dreams will only remain in your head if you never attempt to reach for them.”

Later that evening Aiven and Kisa sit on the back of Hisaki as he fly over the mountains towards the seaside city. Kisa looks out over the ocean as the sun begins to lower in the sky. Hisaki soars over the city and towards the cliffs on the far side.

They land on top of the plateau, which was labeled the last check point of the cross country race. Kisa leaps off the back of Hisaki and runs to the edge of the cliff. She gazes wide eyed at the canyon, “Woah!” Aiven steps up beside her, “Yeah it reminds me of the canyon we used to train in, except a extreme version.”

“I bet I could do it easily”, Kisa gloats. “Yeah, doubt you can beat me though, I did win this race” Aiven brags shooting down her pride. “Yeah whatever, Mr. born to ride.” Kisa laughs.

Aiven chuckles as he unfolds the blanket spreading it out onto the ground. Kisa automatically plops herself down making herself comfortable as Aiven pulls out 2 small pigeon pies that he had purchased in town along with a bottle of ale and two wooden cups.

“This is lovely Aiven, it truly is.” Kisa says sincerely. “I also made some honey soaked peaches inside some sweet bread for dessert” Aiven shyly reveals. “Aren’t you talented guess you have a bakers placement tattoo for a reason.”   
 Aiven looks down at his mutilated tattoo, “Yeah I also have this large claw scar for a reason too.” Aiven glances over at Hisaki, “Right Hisaki?” Hisaki stiffens up and turns away ignoring Aiven’s comment.

Aiven stares at Kisa as the setting sun reflects off her golden hair. Her brown eyes that hold a smidge of loneliness behind them stare out across the ocean. “Kisa I need to tell you something,” Aiven spits out. Kisa looks over at him her expression on changed, “I need to tell you something too.” Aiven’s heart begins to race, “What, what is it?” he stutters.

Kisa places her hand on top of his, “I want to stay here with you.” Aiven’s face starts to grow red as he feels his cheeks growing red. Kisa just smiles and continues, “You’re my only true friend.” Aiven’s heart halts, he feels as if a truck has just hit him. He never knew such a small sentence could hurt so much. Kisa goes on unaware of Aiven’s reaction, “Everyone else in the city just wanted to befriend me because they wanted to either know a dragon rider or they wanted to boost their own position. They weren’t really my friends, they all just wanted to use me for their own benefit. But you weren’t like that. I felt like you just wanted to be friends with someone who was accepting of the real you and that you could be yourself around. And that’s what I wanted to. Thank you Aiven for being the best friend I could ask for.”

Aiven is paralyzed, best friends was better than nothing except he wanted more. He quickly debates in his mind on what he should say next as Kisa waits for his input on her confession. Aiven takes a deep breath and swallows his feelings, “You’re my longest friend other than Hisaki, I would love for you to stay here with me for as long as you want.”

Kisa becomes excited, “Oh! Thank You!” she says with glee as she throws her arms around Aiven pull him into a tight hug. “You’re welcome,” Aiven whispers.

Later that night Aiven sits in the pub with Bernard. Aiven’s arms are folded on the table as he puts his head face first into them. “So I’m guessing it didn’t go so well.” Bernard points out. Aiven shakes his head with out lift it up from his arms. “She said that we were best friends, luckily she said it before I told her how I felt so I didn’t embarrass myself.” Aiven mumbles into his arms. “Ouch, the best friend.” Bernard responds. He pats Aiven on the back, “Don’t worry she is living with you right? Then you can still win her heart over. The best person to marry is your best friend, cause you already know you get a long with them in a non-romantic way. You just enjoy each others company and not because you are sexually attracted to them.”

Aiven lifts up his head, “ Thanks Bernard, you’re like a wise uncle that I’ve never had.” Bernard chuckles, “I’ve had to many years of experience. To be honest, I married my best friend. We both wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.” Aiven smiles as Bernard shouts for an order of two ales.

A week later Kisa is woken up to three loud bangs on the door. She looks around the room just begging to fill with light wondering what time it is. She looks down off the loft as three more bangs echo through the small house.

Aiven’s door creaks as he opens it. He yawns n stretches as he walks over to the front door. Kisa peers over the railing curious who is knocking this early in the morning.

Aiven sleepily opens the front door and suddenly becomes wide awake and freezes in place. Kisa leans over the railing trying to see around the open door.

“Aiven \_\_\_\_?” A Dragon Rider in full uniform asks, two other ones standing behind him. Aiven’s mouth is dry and has trouble forming the words that come out of his mouth, “Wh Why does that concern you?” “You are under arrest for the illegal capture and riding of a dragon, resisting arrest, (car chase)”

The two Dragon Riders standing in the back push forward into the house each taking one of Aiven’s arms. Kisa falls backwards with startled before gathering herself back up and heading down the stairs as they push Aiven face first to the ground pulling his hands behind his back to hand cuff him.

“Stop! You can’t arrest him” Kisa shouts as she reaches the bottom of the stairs. The head Rider glances over to her but ignores her. The two Riders lift Aiven up to his knees after hand cuffing him, Aiven stares directly at the head Rider, “Actually you can’t as I am not a citizen of \_\_\_\_\_\_ any more. I have signed them over and gained citizen ship of the country \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Where I am legally allowed to own and ride my dragon. I am no longer under \_\_\_\_\_ rules.”

The head Rider pierces his eyebrows as he looks down at Aiven with frustration, “Fine then we gradually invite you to speak in person with the King of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Uncuff him he is no longer our prisoner but a guest.

One of the two Riders uncuffs Aiven as he searches his mind of what to do, he does not want to fight the riders and get arrested but can not come up with any other solution except to listen and do as he is told. Guess its time to have a little word with the King.

The three Riders usher Aiven and Kisa out of the house towards the three dragons waiting out front. Hisaki peers around the back of the house as he watches Aiven climb aboard the dark grey dragon. Aiven looks over at the barely visible Hisaki and tells him to get Kisa’s dragon and follow them secretly back to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Aiven and Kisa each sit a top of a different dragon with their Riders. They lock eyes both with apologetic eyes, not knowing who should be sorry for getting each other in this situation.

After a couple days of traveling Aiven’s home island come into view over the horizon. Being under constant supervision and serperation Aiven hasn’t been able to say a word to Kisa since the arrest back at his house. He starts to look back to see her but decides against it as he is to embarrassed still to make eye contact with her again.

The three dragons soar over the mountains surrounding the small nation and the city comes into view. Aiven looks over the city he thought he would never lay eyes on again. He spots his fathers bakery down below as they fly towards the kings castle.

They land in front of the enormous entrance doors. Unexpectedly a cloak is thrown over Aiven hiding his face before any one near the gate could see him. Aiven blindly jumps off the back of the dragon after it’s rider. Kisa is pulled off and dropped to the ground. The rider lifts her up by the arm and her and Aiven are ushered into towards the front doors.

Aiven is only able to see his feet outside of the hooded cloak. He hears the massive doors being cranked open and sees they have entered the castle as he steps onto the marbled flooring. He can hear the clicking of the riders boots as they walk down the hollow hall. The doors creaking as they are cranked and slammed shut. The sound shoots through the open stone hall and echoes through Aiven’s head.

The head Rider grabs Aiven’s shoulder stopping him from proceeding further and pushes him down to his knees. He yanks the cloak off him revealing him to the king.

A young nanny races down the road from the castle heading in the direction of lower class market street. She had happened to be outside the castle and was able to catch sight of Aiven’s face before the cloak was thrown over him.

She burst into the bakery and leans over her hands on her knees trying to catch her breath. Aiven’s father stands in front of the shop, “May I help you?”

Aiven kneel side by side in front of the King who sits high on his thrown glaring down at them disgusted to even have them in his sight. “Aiven \_\_\_\_\_ you have cause a lot of trouble around here, with your criminal acts. Now you say we can not punish you for breaking the rules cause you are (Abiged) a citizen of \_\_\_\_\_ now and have legal rights to own a dragon. Is this true?”  
  
 “Yes sir” Aiven speaks up. “Now tell me, this southern country they have dragons?” Aiven pauses for a moment not sure if he should speak the truth or not, “I wish not to answer sir” The King smirks, “Oh but I already know the answer to that, the group of riders that found you was larger than three. The others have already seen the dragons and have returned to me with the information. I just want to hear you say it. Now tell me, what do they do with these dragons and how do they acquire one.”

Aiven snarls hating the game that the king is playing with him, “You can purchase one just as you can purchase a horse. Then they race them as a sport.” “Games! So it’s true they use dragons for games.” The King laughs “What inmbesoles, don’t they know what power a dragon holds.” “They don’t care about power and position, they live life to the fullest. They love and help one another. They enjoy what life has given them. Unlike the society you’ve brought up.” Aiven snaps.

“Don’t disrespect me boy, you are on my land again. Watch what you say.” The King warns him. “I may not be able to arrest you, but I know someone who is still a citizen here.” The King looks down at Kisa and facts a frown, “Aw Kisa you had such potential, you could have been a great but you threw it all away for a boy who abandoned his own country for selfish desires. Kisa, I sentence you to life for harboring a fugitive and giving false accusations to the military for personal benefit.”

Both Aiven and Kisa’s hearts drop as the King finishes his sentence. Kisa quickly takes Aiven’s hand he looks over at her. Her frightened eyes begin to tear as she grips his hand. Two guards walk over from their places against the wall. One pulls Kisa to her feet as the other pries her hand from Aiven’s.

“Riders show Mr. Aiven out the front door. His presence isn’t required here anymore.” The two riders take Aiven by the arms as he begins to lunge towards Kisa. Kisa squints as they pull her arms behind her cuffing them together, “Aiven incase I never see you again, I wanted you to know I’ve been in love with you for a long time now.”

Aiven is yanked away by the riders before he is able to respond, he tries to look back over his shoulder as he sees the guards taking Kisa out one of the many doors in the front hall.

Aiven squints as the bright light flows in as the doors slowly open. The two riders waste no time and push him out of the door as soon as it is wide enough to fit him through and quickly shut them behind him. Aiven catches his balance and stands back up straight and looks down the castle steps at his father who stares up at him with a stern expression.  
 Aiven slowly climbs down the steps and stands face to face with the man that has raised him, “Hey dad.” Aiven’s father pulls him in to a hug as a few tears slip down his cheeks, “You’re alive, I can’t believe it.” Aiven pulls back from the hug, “Alive, what do you mean?” His father releases him and wipes his face dry, “A few months ago they announced that you were dead.” His dad looks around then leans in, “Lets get away from the castle there’s to many ears here.”

Aiven and his father walk down the crowded streets. Even though it hasn’t even been half a year it feels like its been ages since he’s been back to the bakery. People whisper to one another as Aiven passes them, he over hears the common topic they are saying, “He’s alive, look he did it, he got away with it”

Aiven makes himself at home and sits at the table as soon as they reach the bakery. His father takes one of the fresher rolls slicing it before setting it on the table in front of Aiven. “Thanks.” Aiven says as he reaches forward taking a slice before slouching in his seat depressed.

His father sits down at the table across from him, “Your name as become pretty well known around town. People see you as some kind of rebellious knight.”

“Yeah, Kisa told me…I’ve also caused a lot of trouble to stir up around town.” Aiven says blaming himself. “Yes there has been many arrests but this could be a start of a larger rebellion, its time for the people to rise. They had it in them they just needed someone to take the first leap, and you did that for them.”

“Except I ran away and became a famous Dragon Racer living a comfortable life, while people here are trying to follow my footsteps and getting themselves arrested and even sometimes killed. What kind of role model am I? Because of me the girl I love just got life sentence.” Aiven argues. “You were famous over there?” His dad questions. “Yeah I won some annual games and got a city of fans and posters of me, but that’s not the point of what I’m saying.” Aiven says.

His dad scoots his chair back and stands up, “I know what you were saying. Even though you feel like you have only caused mayhem for those around you, you shouldn’t feel so down on yourself. The victor must fall before they rise, its how every story is told. Even this countries, even yours.” He starts to walk towards the back room, “Your mother would be extremely proud of you, I know I am.

Aiven becomes speechless. He has never heard those words escape past his father’s lips before. He is unsure if he even just heard that or if he was dreaming.

Aiven’s father returns from the back room with a guitar, “I took your advice and picked up a guitar.” He lifts up the guitar and strums it listening if its in tune. He fixes one of the strings and begins to play. Aiven listens astonished at his fathers talent and how quickly he was able to pick up on guitar playing.

He stops playing and sets down the guitar, “So many people have untapped talents and secret dreams, just because they are scared to pursue them. But now they have been giving courage. If my son can ride a dragon, why can’t I do something as simple as play a guitar?”

Aiven sits back in his seat as he tries to absorb everything that has happened. “Well I wont feel much like a hero, until I figure out a way to rescue Kisa.” He remembers the fear in her eyes as they locked her wrists together. Her last words to him playing over and over in his head, “*I’ve been in love with you for a long time now.”*

Kisa sits on the cot in her cell, two other girls eye her from the other side of the small room. “What are you in for” Kisa asks. “I tried to paint the sunset,” the younger girl says. The older ones replies, “I tried to teach my neighbors daughter how to sing but she is born to be a house wife.”

Kisa shakes her head, “This is all so ridiculous,” “What did you” The younger one pipes up. Kisa grins and tells them about her connection to Aiven and about the southern country.

The king sits at a large table filled with food as he discusses with (insert other position people) what should be done with \_\_\_\_\_\_ . So and so says, “We can’t just ignore the fact they have dragons, our indigenous items is what our country thrives off of.” “So and so is right, if they have the same stuff as us people could turn to them for trading instead” Blank agrees. Bob adds on “If people just start buying dragons it would become a common thing and people wont fear our small nation anymore. Then nothing will be stopping them from attacking us.”

The king nods at all their points, “There is only one conclusion on how to settle this. We will attack \_\_\_\_\_\_, and claim the land. We will change their laws to the same as ours and will stop anyone from being able to own a dragon if not authorized by myself only. The boy had concluded that they only use them for games. They will have no idea on how to fight with them enabling a easy victory.”

Kisa lays on the cot as two guards chat in across the hall of cells. She has nothing else to do and decides to listen just for the fun of it. Guard on the left, “Did you hear about the Kings plan for that southern country?” Kisa sits up suddenly intrigued on what they were saying. She listens intensely as the other guard replies, “Yeah I heard that they also have dragons but the attack should be easy cause all they do is play around on them.” The guards laugh together. “Yeah they wont even know what hit them. Maybe after we expand I can get a nice vacation home down there, depends on what its like though.” The guard on the left says.

“No they’re going to war, we have to warn them some how.” Kisa says to herself.

Kisa waits until late in the night, she constantly checks the guards and watches as they start to nod off in their positions. “What are you doing?” the younger girl in the cell asks. I have to communicate to my friend, that country doesn’t deserve what is coming for them.” Kisa answers.

Kisa pushes the cot below the small window high on the wall. She stand on top of the cot and is barely able to peak over the window sill. She pulls her whistle from out of her shirt and blows it as hard as she can. The two other girls stare at her confused as she blows a silent whistle.

They begin to doubt her plan for a moment then take it back as they see a beige dragon appear outside the window peering in. “Tatsu! Tell Hisaki everything that I’m about to tell you.”

“Say what!” Aiven shouts as he sits up in bed startling his father awake. “Aiven what is wrong with you?” He questions a little aggravated. Aiven has already left his bed and shuffle around the room, “Hisaki, Hisaki told me that Kisa over heard the kings plan, he’s going to try and over take \_\_\_\_\_. I can’t let that happen.” Aiven slips on his shoes and his dad slips out of his bed and walks over to him.

“Sorry dad for such a short visit, but I’ve got to help my friends.” Aiven apologizes. “It’s ok son, at least your leaving to help people instead of a criminal like last time.” His father jokes. “Very funny dad. Thank you for believing in me though, it means a lot.” Aiven says thoughtfully before heading out the front door of the bakery.

His father follows him and stands in the entryway as Hisaki lands softly outside the shop. Aiven climbs up onto his back and waves goodbye to his father looking up at him from the doorway Aiven walked out so many months before, as Hisaki lifts his wings and takes off towards the sky.