



THE  
DRAGON  
PRINCE

BOOK TWO: SKY

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# CHAPTER 1

## A FEW MORE DAYS

Come and get it, everyone!”

Callum’s ears perked up. There was a gnawing hole in his stomach where food should have been. It seemed like Lujanne had been preparing breakfast for ages. *Wasn’t she a mage? Couldn’t she just conjure something up?*

Callum hurried over to the long wooden table nestled in the clearing. He took a seat and looked around the caldera for Rayla. It still felt strange to be friends with a Moonshadow elf, especially an assassin sent to kill his little brother. But he and Ezran—the two princes of Katolis—were still alive and Rayla was now one of the best friends Callum had ever had. He didn’t see her, though. Maybe she was sleeping in for once.

“Morning, Callum!” Ezran said, coming up behind his brother. “Boy, am I hungry! But I think Bait is even hungrier.”

Ezran motioned to the pet glow toad at his feet.

Callum glanced at Bait, marveling at his little brother's ability to perceive what animals were feeling. Callum himself could usually tell Bait's mood by the hue of his color-changing skin, but Bait's teal-spotted yellow skin hadn't changed—he was just as grumpy as ever. (Of course, those who knew Bait well knew that underneath the façade of “grump” there was great loyalty, courage, and even grumpy love.)

“Oh, his skin didn't give him away,” Ezran said. “And he didn't tell me in glow toad either. He communicated with the universal language—tummy growling!” Ezran chuckled. “But I think Zym is the hungriest of all.”

Azymondias, the Dragon Prince whom they all called “Zym,” romped over to Ezran and Callum. Only a week ago, this adorable, puppy-like dragon with long eyelashes and a tender heart was inside an egg. And now he was out—hatched and healthy! It was a little hard to believe that Zym was destined to become a massive, epic archdragon. Callum patted the dragon on the head, and Zym immediately nipped at his fingers.

“Hang on, buddy,” Callum said. “Breakfast is coming.”

“Whoa! Ava! Come back here, girl!”

A huge wolf burst into the clearing, followed by Ellis. Ellis was the brave girl who'd led them up the Cursed Caldera in search of the Moon mage Lujanne. Years ago, Lujanne had healed Ellis's wolf pet, Ava. Ava was massive, but despite her size, she was as tame (and as fluffy) as a kitten. She was missing a leg due to an old injury, but she didn't seem to notice or care. Ava gave Zym a big lick on the cheek.

Callum sighed, feeling lucky they'd met all these new people and creatures on their journey. After all, Zym might not ever have hatched if Callum and Ezran hadn't met Ellis and Ava and Lujanne.

He also felt lucky he was about to consume the most tantalizing dishes he had ever seen.

"Elves and humans over here," Lujanne said, pointing to the garland-covered table. "And those with three or more legs can sit there, with Phoe-Phoe." Lujanne gestured to a nearby clearing where her pet, the immense moon phoenix Phoe-Phoe, was standing. Phoe-Phoe guarded four large bowls with her spread feathers, but Callum could see that the dishes were heaped with squiggling worm-things. Ava, Zym, and Bait hopped over to Phoe-Phoe and immediately began chowing down.

"You named your pet 'Phoe-Phoe'?" Ellis asked Lujanne in her squeaky voice.

"She's a moon phoenix," Lujanne said. "Her name is short for Phoenix-Phoenix."

Phoe-Phoe squawked and flapped her brilliant blue wings when she heard her own name.

"Can we try whatever we want?" Callum asked, greedily eyeing an iced chocolate cake. Ezran had already helped himself to a plate of cookies, but Callum didn't want to be rude.

"Of course, dear," Lujanne said sweetly. "The choice is all yours."

"You have the best food up here," Ezran garbled. His mouth was full and he clutched pastries in both hands. "What's your secret?"

“Well . . .” Lujanne started. She tapped a long, shapely fingernail on her tan cheek. Her lip twitched. “My secret is . . . that it’s all fake.” She smiled.

“What do you mean, fake?” Callum asked as he sank his teeth into a crispy layered pastry. Nothing had ever tasted more flaky, more buttery, more delectable than this delicate tower of delight.

“You know, fake,” she said. “They’re delicious illusions.”

Callum nodded while he chewed, although he had no idea what Lujanne was talking about.

“You’re actually eating grubs,” Lujanne said, still smiling sweetly.

Callum froze midbite, and then placed the exquisite treat he was holding back on the table. He tried to stay focused on the melt-in-your-mouth flaky goodness, but now that he knew it was a spell, he was starting to detect the writhing larvae that were apparently being disguised by the illusion.

“Oh, you must mean ‘grub’?” Ezran asked. He brushed a few long dark curls out of his eyes. “Like as in, ‘Wow, this is some good grub!’”

Callum looked over at Ezran. His kid brother was still eating with gusto. He wanted to explain to Ezran that there was no cultural misunderstanding over the word *grubs*, but he was too nauseated.

“Um . . . no,” Lujanne said. “Do you see what Phoe-Phoe is eating?”

Callum looked over at the pet area, where the four animals had their heads buried in squirming worms. All Callum could

hope was that Ezran would swallow his last bite before he realized the unpleasant truth.

“That bowl of worms?” Ezran asked tentatively.

“Those are grubs,” Lujanne said. “Technically not worms, but insect larvae. Extremely nutritious!”

Ezran clutched his stomach. Nearby, Ellis continued to chew what appeared to be a slice of blueberry chocolate pie.

“I don’t care,” Ellis said. “Worms. Flies. Yesterday’s garbage. This illusion pie is the best I’ve ever had.” She cut herself another slice as Ezran quietly vomited onto the grass.

“Hey, everybody!” Rayla called out, jumping down from a hilltop and waving both hands.

*Rayla!* Callum stood up, desperate to move on from the whole grubs situation.

“Well, you’re in a good mood,” Ellis said to Rayla.

“It does feel good to have two working hands again,” Rayla said. Her pointy ears wiggled with excitement. When she caught sight of Ava with only three legs, she looked a little sheepish. “Uh, no offense, Ava.” But Ava just panted happily and returned to her grubs.

“Guess what, folks—I can slish and slash with both swords again,” Rayla said. She hurled herself up a craggy rock, swung both blades around in an exuberant whirl, and then quickly folded them away. “I can also clap, do handstands, and do that thing when you finish a nice song and dance.” Rayla clapped, tumbled into a handstand, and finished off with perfect form, waving both hands in the air.

“That’s so great, Rayla!” Ezran exclaimed.

Callum was relieved Rayla's hand had fully healed. Just a few days ago, it had turned a deep and disturbing shade of purple, constricted by a tight binding on her wrist. Rayla had magically bound herself to killing the human prince, Ezran. But of course, that was before they had gotten to know each other. When Rayla decided she would not follow through on her assassin's duty, the unbreakable binding became tighter and tighter until it seemed her hand might fall off. But the little dragon Zym had solved the problem by nibbling off the binding with his baby teeth! Easy for Zym, but a true miracle for anyone who wasn't a legendary dragon.

"And how's everybody else feeling?" Rayla asked, cupping her now healthy hand to her ear.

She received a chorus of enthusiastic responses.

"Glad to hear everyone is feeling good!" Rayla went on. She looked around mischievously. Then her voice turned from playful to deadly serious. "Cause it's time to go."

"What? Why?" Callum asked. "We barely just got to the Moon Nexus."

Everyone else groaned in agreement. If nothing else, Callum thought saving and hatching a dragon egg might buy him three or four days of rest and relaxation.

But Rayla ignored the griping. "Danger is coming for us, I know it. The longer we stay here, the higher the risk," she told them. "I'm not trying to scare you all, I'm just being realistic."

"She's right," Lujanne said. "The night the Dragon Prince was born, I sensed something amiss." She shook her head. "Those strange purple wisps that were drawn to the newborn



dragon that night—pretty as they were, there were dark forces behind them that are now probably pursuing you.”

“Nobody likes dark forces! Which is why—” Rayla signaled it was time to go by swinging both hands toward the foot of the mountain.

“Making good use of those two hands, huh?” Ezran said.

Callum smiled. His little brother had inherited their mother’s sense of humor. Her jokes had often been accompanied by an encouraging smile, as Ezran’s was now.

“You bet I am,” Rayla said. “Besides, we’ve got precious cargo to deliver. War is coming, like the world’s never seen, unless we get the wee dragon home to his mom.”

“But Zym—he’s so widdle. He still needs to learn how to fly,” Ezran said.

“Ez is right,” Callum said. He was also reluctant to leave the relative safety of the Moon Nexus while Zym was still so fragile. Plus, he was hoping to learn some Moon magic while they were here.

“Ezran seems to have a special connection to the dragonling,” Lujanne said thoughtfully. She turned to Ezran. “Perhaps you could teach him to fly?”

“Me?” Ezran asked. “But I don’t know how to fly.”

Callum nodded encouragingly at his little brother. He was sure Ezran was the right person for the job, despite his lack of wings.

“I could try,” Ezran finally said.

“Good. We’ll be stronger as a group if Zym can fly,” Callum said. “And even stronger if I knew more magic. Maybe you could teach me some Moon magic, Lujanne?”

“I could show you some things,” she said.

“Ummm, Lujanne, I thought you were on my side?” Rayla said. “Remember, dark forces, purple wisps?”

Lujanne shrugged noncommittally.

“A few more days, Rayla—that’s all we’re asking,” Callum pleaded. “I wrote a letter to my stepfather to catch him up on everything. I think there’s a real chance that he’ll send us help if he can. We should hang out for that.”

“A letter to your stepfather? The . . . king?” Rayla asked.

“Yes. That’s what I said,” Callum replied. He noticed Rayla’s face turn even paler than usual. She could clearly use some rest too.

“Fine,” Rayla relented. “We’ll stay one extra day—one! But I’m serious about the danger. I’ll keep patrolling. Everyone else, stay on your toes.” She looked intently at each member of the group, her eyes landing on Zym. “Except you. You work on getting *off* those toes!” She flapped her hands like wings, and the baby dragon seemed to smile in reply.

Callum was glad Rayla was going to continue patrolling to keep them safe—but he was even gladder that he now might have enough time to learn some Moon magic.