



A LEXI WALKER ADVENTURE

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THE DRAGONFLY

Have you ever seen a dragon?

One night, after a particularly challenging Mathematics lesson, Lexi sat on her bed, her digic stretched out in front of her as she tried desperately to absorb as much as she could about Ring Theory. She was fed up of Sage Nergal always picking on her and trying to make her feel stupid. She wouldn't be surprised if the sage was the one who sabotaged the vector runner, she all but said she wanted Lexi out the Blue Shift Academy.

She lay back and closed the privacy shield. Sidra still wasn't back yet and anyway, Lexi wanted to be alone. The ethereal wall of shimmering blue light wrapped around Lexi's bed shut out the rest of the room.

She tapped her finger, trying to think of what the Galactic Rangers could have been guarding. All she'd caught was a glimpse of light, nothing she could see properly.

Someone moved on the other side of the privacy shield. Not in the mood to chat, she pretended she was asleep as a shadowy figure drifted around the room. It moved between the beds as if it was looking for something. Lexi peered between the shimmer, trying to get some idea of who it could be. It didn't move like any of her roommates.

It shuddered across the room, moving in spurts and jerks, its footsteps clicking on the cold floor. Click click, click click. Lexi watched in silence, her heart pounding. This wasn't one of her friends. Who had broken into their room?

She could barely see through the shield but if she opened it, what would happen then? Lexi couldn't use her powers to protect herself, she'd be expelled. Something was in her room. Panic started to rise inside her. All the other students were out. She was alone and totally vulnerable.

The shadow headed to Lexi's bed, jerking closer and closer. It rose up as if standing on hind legs, reaching towards the shield. Lexi gripped the covers and held her breath. Her heart raced.

Suddenly, light burst into the room. The shadow melted away and there was Sidra, standing on the other side of the privacy shield, waving at Lexi. She slammed the button, causing the shield to dissolve into shimmering smoke and grabbed Sidra's wrist. She wrenched her friend onto the bed, peering around the room. Her hands glittered, ready to defend her friend.

"What are you doing?" Sidra asked, peering over Lexi's shoulder.

"Stay behind me." She glared into every corner, inspected every shadow. The monster in her room would not get her friend. "Where's it gone?"

"What? What are you on about?" Sidra pushed past Lexi and hopped off the bed.

"Sidra, please," Lexi called, "There's something in here, it's dangerous!"

Frowning, she looked around. "There's nothing here."

"Are you sure?"

Sidra held up her hands in a huge shrug. "You were dreaming. You looked asleep when I came in." Sidra glanced at Lexi's digic, still stretched out across her bed, although somewhat crumpled now. "You've filled your head with the evils of Jolex the Conqueror and you're having nightmares." She sat gently on the bed beside Lexi. "You won't end up like him, you know. I won't let you and neither will Tim or Roko. Your friends are here with you. When we're together, nothing can stop us."

Lexi smiled at Sidra. Back on Earth, Tim was her only friend. Now, here at the BSA, all that was changing and she couldn't be happier.

The door burst open and in ran Jess and Mika with Selene, another one of their roommates. Lexi's smile broke into a huge grin.

"You've got to come, quick!" Selene announced excitedly.

"Have you ever seen a dragonfly?" Jess demanded enthusiastically.

Sidra's face lit up and Lexi said, "Yeah, well, of course. I mean, I -"

Sidra grabbed Lexi's hand and tugged her off the bed. "Not like this, you haven't. Get your hoverboard."

Lexi scooped up the precious board given to her by Yeren and her digic from her bed, shrinking that down to pocket size. As she was whisked from her bedroom by Sidra, she glanced over her shoulder trying to spot the creeping shadow.

The room was empty.

"You've dragged me out here in the middle of the night to see a dragonfly?" Tim grumbled. He shoved his hands into his uniform pockets and stood next to Roko with his shoulders hunched.

"This isn't just a dragonfly," Roko explained. "They only live on moons. They're outside the dome!"

Tim had never been this close to the dome that covered the Blue Shift Academy. A smooth pane of glass, crystal clear, disappeared seamlessly into the rock. As Tim ran his hand along it, he wondered what it was made from and how they controlled it. Despite spaceships landing and taking off everyday, flying straight through the dome, it felt solid.

"Tim!" Lexi called with a wave as she and the others came stomping down the path to where Tim had been stood waiting for ages to see this flying dragon thing. Whatever the dragonfly was, he doubted it was worth the wait. He'd been revising digic circuit systems to impress Sage Brokker at their next lesson when Roko hauled him outside. He felt what he had originally been doing was a better use of his time.

"This is Blue Shift Academy tradition," Selene explained. Despite being the smallest in the group, she was at least three years older than Tim and the others. She was clutching her hoverboard and Tim noticed, Lexi had brought hers too. "Every quarter cycle, the dragonfly shed their coats. All the new students *have* to see it," she declared.

Another ten minutes of nothing happening caused Tim to start tapping his foot.

"Will this take much longer?"

"Just wait."

With a heavy sigh, that's just what he did. Hands in his pockets, he sulked. What happened next, Tim would remember for the rest of his life.

It began with a rumble he felt in his feet. Gently at first, then rougher until the ground shook so hard he almost lost his balance.

"It's happening!" Selene exclaimed with an excited squeal.

At first, Tim couldn't be sure what he was looking at.

A shimmering, purplish smoke poured out from the ground, not far from the outer edge of the dome. Curiosity tugged at him, urging him to take a closer look.

"What.. what is that?"

Roko grinned and moved closer, joined by all the others. Lexi pressed her nose flat against the glass.

"How do you know what this is?" Lexi asked Roko.

"They told us at the Induction meeting," he explained. "You did have an induction meeting?"

Tim shook his head, no. It seemed the experiment was simply to throw the humans into the Blue Shift Academy and see what happened.

Before him, the smoke grew taller, twisting and swirling in the air, shimmering with hues of purple, pink and blue. Tim caught glimpses of sparkling gold as the smoke spiralled its way into space.

"That's the prettiest moon fart I've ever seen!" Roko declared loudly.

In front of them, the smoke began to take shape. Tim's eyes widened in astonishment as two, majestic heads emerged, adorned with razor teeth and deep, fire-lit eyes, beautiful yet terrifying.

The wisps of smoke morphed into bodies with flapping fins that soared gracefully through the star filled sky. As the last remnants of smoke dissolved into the darkness, the wispy ends transformed into magnificent tails and two dragons danced in the airless sky beyond the dome.

Tim gasped in awe.

"Is this real?" Tim asked, hardly believing that he was watching two dragons as thin as smoke, weaving their way across the sky.

"Look! They're shedding!" Roko cried, pointing through the glass as droplets of gold flecks floated down to the moon's surface like golden rain.

"Want to go collect some of the skin?" Selene asked Lexi, holding up her hoverboard.

"But, how will we breathe?" Lexi looked doubtfully through the dome.

Selene gave her a confused frown for a moment, then rolled her eyes. "Of course, you don't know anything." She shoved Lexi on a particular part of her shoulder and in a snap, a small, light forcefield wrapped around Lexi's face. "Built in spacesuit," she explained. "As long as we don't stay outside the dome for too long. It's really cold in space."

Aboard her hoverboard, Selene slipped through the dome as if it wasn't there. The dome didn't change, nothing was different but now Selene was on the other side, shivering and waiting for Lexi.

Tim watched her take a deep breath, stepping on to her hoverboard, soaring through to the other side. A sinking feeling turned Tim's stomach. Lexi was outside, in space, totally exposed. What if she fell off the moon? What if Skurk was waiting right there? He could pounce and no one would be able to save her.

"Are they going to be alright?" Tim asked Roko.

"Yeah, Selene's really smart. She took the hoverboards. If they get into any trouble, they can fly back into the dome."

"Are they likely to get into any trouble?"

Roko shrugged. "Probably not."

"Look at the Chosen One!" cried Jess.

Tim jumped, heart in his throat, and peered through the glass, but he didn't need to worry. She was swirling and twisting on her hoverboard as if dancing with the smoke dragons. Two weeks of training on her hoverboard and she was almost as good as when she had her powers.

The dragons wound their mist around her, twirling and spinning as the golden rain fell to the moon's surface. The air twinkled with the light of dancing dragons. He stood statue still and held his breath. Everything else around him faded away. The sight reminded him of the Northern lights, and he imagined this was what they would look like, if the lights were alive. The dragons were magical, real magic, filling up the air before him. Lexi was already half covered in golden rain, peacefully gliding here and there while Selene collected the fallen, shed skin from the ground.

Then it was all over, Selene was back on this side of the dome, her gloved hands filled with flecks of dragon skin.

They all sat in a circle beneath the edge of the dome where she handed out golden flecks to everyone, except Lexi who was still picking dragon skin out her hair.

"I'm glad that's an Academy tradition," said Sidra, leaning back to look up at the stars.

"Do.. do you think," Jess began, hesitating. She glanced at Lexi but carried on. "Do you think Skurk ever watched the dragons dance? He went to the Blue Shift Academy, didn't he? He wore the blue."

"Why are you asking?" Lexi asked. Tim recognised the tone of her voice, it matched the scowl on her face.

The others went silent, all eyes on Jess as she stumbled forward with the conversation. She fidgeted with her golden fleck, turning it round in her fingers nervously.

"I don't know. Do you think about Skurk? I mean, it's a worry, isn't it? Isn't it?"

"You tell me," Lexi said, coldly.

Jess looked nervously around the group, searching for someone who'd speak up with her. No one did. She pressed on alone. "I didn't mean nothing bad," she said. "It's just that, I know you... stopped that boy on Earth but, well, Skurk has loads of other followers, not just that one kid."

Tim noticed the pause before Jess said 'stopped' and by the look on Lexi's face, she did too. She gritted her teeth and Tim noticed a slight twinkling of light in the palm of her hands. They'd never talked about the moon resort and what had happened there. Tim never knew if it had all been an accident, and he hadn't wanted to find out.

"Let's talk about something else," said Sidra quickly. She fingered the golden fleck through her knuckles.

The conversation moved on but Tim noticed all Jess's nervous looks in Lexi's direction. How many other students were worried about Skurk and his plans for the Chosen One? Was his agent

already here? They'd tried to stop them all getting to the Academy at all, then the incident in the hangar. This agent of Skurk's seemed to have gone quiet or given up. Whatever it was, Tim didn't want to think about it.

"Students out of dorms in the middle of the night!" Sage Nergal cried, marching down the path towards them. "Absolutely outrageous!"

Everyone shot to their feet, looking guilty. Of all the teachers to discover them, it had to be Nergal! It was like she had a sixth sense for discovering rule breaking. "The Chosen One," she roared, her eyes resting on Lexi. "I might have known this would be all your idea. You should be thrown out of the Academy for this behaviour. I will tell Dr Asclepius."

Anxiously, worrying the whole way about getting expelled, Tim marched back to his time as Sage Nergal raged at them all about the dangers of being so close to the dome and being lost into space. Dana had a hundred other reasons why they should be back in their dorms fast asleep.

Despite being told off, and despite Jess's strange conversation choice, Tim was glad he went. He had never seen anything so magical in all his life.

They were still talking about it at breakfast, everyone keeping their golden flecks close by, tucked away in pockets. During Chemistry, Lexi caught Tim testing some of the chemicals on the fleck, until Sage Al-Kimiya told him to focus on the lesson. At lunch, they all had their own news to share.