

# True feelings

Von Aqua111

The moon was shining, crickets were chirping. It could have been a perfect calm night – if not the roaring Migrator would have disturbed the silence.

“Oh great”, Nosedive muttered, “The first calm night without any storms, the first night to sleep well in a week and then a Drake One alarm. Can’t those Saurons just wreck havoc during the day more often, when we all are wide awake anyways?”

“Remember me, to politely ask them when we meet them”, was Duke’s answer.

“The streets are empty, the lights in the buildings are out – seems like we are the only ones outside during that time of the night anyways”, Dive complained, “That’s so unfair. Can’t we at least have such a siren like the Ghostbusters have? With that meep-meep sound we at least wouldn’t be the only ones finding no sleep.”

“Don’t be so harsh”, Wildwing said, “It was our fault after all, that those lizards came to the Earth so it’s also our duty to prevent them from doing harm.”

“I’m not harsh, just grumpy.”

The white drake sighed. Crime fighting, training or games during the days, crime fighting or too loud weather during the nights – they sure didn’t have a too relaxing week.

“Alright, let’s just finish this then get back to bed.”

“Do you Ducks never sleep?” they were greeted by Siege when they arrived and jumped out of the Migrator.

“Now wait a second”, Nosedive protested, “It’s you who keep us up all night.”

“Well, thanks”, the orange Sauron laughed, “I’m always glad if someone tells me I keep him busy all night.”

“Ew...”

“What are you doing out of the Raptor in the middle of the night and all alone anyways?” Wildwing interrupted before their talk lead even more into this strange direction.

“And I could ask you too why a Sauron can’t even take a past midnight walk without your alarms going off. And why you are just around in a group. Well, at least of the latter this little baby could get rid.” He held up his arm where nothing else was than his normal weapon gear – at least on first gaze. Then they noticed a light blue crystal stuck at it. “New invention – hard to believe that it was made by humans. So far this material is just called PX33. My kleptomaniac hands just couldn’t resist when I wandered through the laboratory looking for something interesting. I don’t know what the humans wanted to do with it, but combined with the right weapons it can do that.”

He shot a blast at them.

"Down!"

The Migrator behind them was hit but before they could even look what had happened to it another beam was shot and hit Duke. At first he felt nothing; just a cool breeze blowing against his chest; then there was a sudden tug as if someone had stuck him on a fishing hook and now threw him out as bait. Suddenly he was surrounded by complete darkness and had a feeling as if he was falling – falling while being spinned around by a tornado. Things collided with him but he couldn't see more than blackness. Then something softer hit him, another body. He felt fingers grabbing his arm. The tornado wanted to rip them apart again but the grip was too tight. And suddenly the storm stopped. Duke hit the ground. For a few seconds he just stared into the sky heavily breathing then he turned his head. Nosedive was lying beside him, his fingers still closed around the others arm but not so tight anymore. His gaze showed a mix of insecurity and fear.

"Where are we?"

Not in Anaheim anymore, that was for sure. They were lying in some kind of corridor with a missing ceiling. To their left and right there were high walls covered in ivy and moss. They were lying on an earthy floor. The sky above them was of a dull grey like during dawn or dusk on a very rainy day. It was drizzling slightly.

Both got up and looked around.

"Looks like this crystal brought us to some kind of other dimension – again", Duke said, "We should really get used to it."

He pressed the buttons on his communicator. "Wingster, can you hear me?"

Nothing but the white noise, no matter what frequency he tried.

"Dammit... Do you know if the others are here as well?"

"No, I was hit second after you."

"At least there's two of us so we can watch each others back."

Nosedive was shivering. "Curse that damn rain."

The other one was looking at him for a few seconds, thinking; then he suggested, "We can try warming up one another." He stepped closer, wrapped his arms around the younger drake and pulled him into embrace.

"Better?"

"Yeah, a bit", Dive mumbled against his shoulder.

And there it was again – a feeling cold as ice and hot as lava the same time – the reason why he had avoided being alone with or too close to Nosedive for such a long time. It was rushing through his veins, sending hot and cold waves through his body. Why did this have to come back now, at full force, when he last needed it? He loosened his hold.

"Is something wrong?" Dive asked and looked at him.

"No, I ... I just thought we should get going. That way we'll get warm as well and we still need to find out if the others are somewhere here as well – or at least a way out of this ... building, or whatever it is."

The corridor split up after a few minutes. One way was going on straight, a passage to the side led to a half destroyed stone house. It was impossible that someone still lived in there so they took the straight direction but after a few more meters the way parted again.

"This more and more looks like some kind of maze", Duke said, "But why would one of Dragaunus henchmen have teleported us there? Normally they choose something

more dangerous. But this..."

A loud hiss behind them made them wince. The two spun around. Through the corridor something was crawling that either could have been a long dragon or a giant snake with two legs.

"What the heck is that? Are we caught in a Dungeons & Dragons episode?" it escaped Nosedive's beak.

The lindworm opened his mouth, showed his long poisonous teeth, hissed again and then charged at them.

"Get down!"

Dive looked as if he had frozen at the spot so Duke grabbed his hand and dragged him away. Behind them the dragon crashed against the wall. Its tail shot through the air like a whiplash, trying to hit the two Ducks. Duke had drawn his sword but his slash was of not much avail – he might just as well have tried to cut leather with a butter knife – and a shot puck made the creature even angrier. It glowered at them and dodged, made ready for the next attack.

"Uhm ... so what would you suggest we should do now?" Nosedive asked, voice trembling, while the two drakes slowly backed away until they could feel the cold stone wall behind them.

"So what about ... run?"

When the lindworm jumped the two dashed right below him and ran to the corridor they were about to enter before. They feet were nearly flying over the muddy ground. Another big stone house came in sight. Behind them they heard the dragon crash through a wall.

Nosedive was the first to reach the building and slammed the door open. Sand and a few little stones were trickling from the ceiling. In there they had no protection but there also was no way around it.

"We have to find a rear exit", he shouted.

"No, we have to get up there." Duke dragged him to timeworn and not really trustworthy looking stairs.

"In the first floor we will be trapped."

"But if we just run out at the other side of the house the dragon will crash through the walls and keep following us until we break down. Sword and puckblaster are useless but what if we crash a whole house on him?"

The young drake stared up the stairs where Duke now was waiting for him to follow. This could go wrong on so many levels but what other chances did they have? The door behind him splintered, part of the wall was raining down on him.

"Dive!"

The dragon's head shot up when it heard the call and it saw Duke. Immediately it jumped up, right through the ceiling. Its claws were hard enough to pinch through the stone so it could drag itself up to the first floor.

"Hey, you big lizard, catch me if you can!"

The grey drake jumped out of the window, found balance on a ledge at the wall that led around the house and just could make it far enough to be out of the way when the lindworm crashed through the wall. It quickly turned around while falling, drove its claws into the stones and climbed up again. Duke jumped into another window, the creature right behind him. He rolled out of the way when rocks hit the ground, a big claw landed right beside his face.

"He, never heard of picking someone your own size?"

Nosedive had finally managed to climb up the half-destroyed stairs. The dragon

growled and jumped over to him. The whole house was already shaking. Maybe just one or two more walls... A few more boulders came down when he was running through the rooms, the lindworm behind him. He slid down another stairway while the creature burst through the ceiling again.

"Over here!" he heard Duke's voice shouting. He had climbed down the first staircase. "We need to get out of here; the building can collapse every second!"

Another wall was crashed and this time a real boulder rain started. The two just made it out in time. Behind them the building collapsed.

For a moment they just stood there, panting heavily.

"Do you ... do you think its dead?" the younger one asked after some time.

"There's no way it could have survived this." He now noticed that the younger one has started shivering again and for a moment he thought about pulling him into embrace. Instead he just put a hand on the others shoulder. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, it's just ... I'm still in a flap." He looked at Duke's face for a second, then reached out a hand and touched his cheek. "You're bleeding."

"It's not that bad. Maybe a claw scratched me when that thing landed beside me."

He looked into Nosedive's eyes. The more the adrenaline rush was fading the more he was aware how close they had escaped death. Nearly every day they were risking their lives. Looking into those blue eyes he came to the conclusion that he couldn't move on anymore without having told or shown the younger one how much he really cared for him. He now really pulled Nosedive into a light embrace, whispered "I'm sorry, but I can't carry on without" and kissed him. For a split second it looked like the teenager wanted to return the kiss but then he pushed Duke away. For a second he stared at the older Drake, his gaze filled with confusion and – was there also a slight hint of fear? Then he turned around and ran.

"Dive, wait!" Duke wanted to run after him but was brought to fall when something entwined around his feet. Rakes that had been hanging on the walls before now slowly glided over the floor like snakes.

Nosedive was running until the exhaustion he still hadn't recovered before came back at full force. He leaned against a wall, tried to catch his breath again then slowly sank down to the floor and wrapped his arms around his knees. Why? This one word summed up the whole situation quite well. Why did Duke have to do this? Why now? And why did he, Nosedive, have to run away? It wasn't like he didn't have a crush on Duke before but he always had suppressed it. There was no way he could fall in love with another drake. And now Duke came and nearly shattered his long lasting self-control. Why? Had he fallen for him as well or was it just the adrenaline that caused his feelings to surge up – like in movies when two people suddenly fell for another after they had been through danger? And if it was really love, how should they still be able to live in the Pond with the others – if they ever were able to get back home? How would their reaction be if he told them or if they found out? It was the first time that he was afraid of his own feelings.

A cry ripped him out of his thoughts. Duke! He jumped up and ran back the way he had come. Oh why did he have to run away and leave the other all alone in a world like this? He would have never been able to forgive himself if something bad happened to the other because of his fault.

Duke was hanging about two meters over the ground. Rakes were wrapped around different parts of his body. The more he moved the more they tightened their grip.

Some of them had thorns which cut into his flesh. It all had happened too fast, he hadn't even gotten the slightest chance to defend himself. In the corners of his eyes he noticed someone running closer.

"Stay away from them, Dive!"

The rake around his waist tightened another time, thorns pierced through his skin, made him cry out in pain.

Nosedive drew his blaster.

"Hold on, I'll get you out of here. Let's see how they like a few explosion pucks."

He fired far enough from Duke to not hurt him. The shock wave ripped the plant out of the earth. Before the other rakes could strengthen their grip around Duke's body he also fired at them. The grey drake fell back to the floor but was caught by Dive before he could hit it – more or less caught because the sudden weight caused the teenager to tumble as well.

For a few heartbeats they were sitting on the ground just staring at one another.

"Thanks for helping me", Duke finally said. "And ... forgive me what I have done before..." He looked down at the ground. "I didn't mean to ... just forget it ..."

"No, I should be sorry because I was the one who ran away although I had just seen what could have awaited us in here and knew that if we were all alone we could be attacked even easier. And ... I also don't want to forget it – not anymore. I have already held it back for too long."

This time it was him who started the kiss and Duke didn't pull away although he first seemed to be surprised by Dive's confession and sudden movement. It was just lasting for a few seconds but it seemed like the younger one wanted to put all of the feelings he held back for months into this one kiss. When they broke apart they still looked at each other in silence until Duke said, "I know what you were feeling. Felt that too for a very long time. It's somehow strange to fall for another drake, moreover if he's one of your friends."

"But at least you had the courage to show your feelings after some time."

"Well, I always was rather the badass type."

Nosedive chuckled slightly but then got serious again. "I first was worrying about what the others would say and think but now I rather fear that we will never be able to get home again."

"Hey, don't worry", Duke softly said and hugged him, "We will find a way. And if not we then the others. They won't let us down."

They had started walking again but after what seemed to be hours they barely could move on again. Hunger, thirst and tiredness were wearing them down. And Duke still had his wounds. They were neither deep nor big but still they were hurting with each step.

No attackers had appeared anymore but it also wasn't necessary. The greatest danger now was the labyrinth itself.

"Just a little bit more then we'll rest", Duke promised.

The road split up again and both corridors made a turn after a few steps so that they couldn't see what was lying behind them.

"Okay, we split up here but only go as far as necessary to look around the corners. We won't lose sight of each other."

The younger one just nodded and went to the left while the grey drake took the right way.

"No, mine is just a dead end", he said.

"My way is somehow blocked as well although we could squeeze through. But you just have to see that", Nosedive was calling.

Duke rushed over to him and looked around the corner as well. The Migrator was standing in the corridor.

"I remember the beam hit it as well but didn't think about it so far anymore", Nosedive said when he was climbing in and sunk down on one of the seats. "At least we now have a secure place to rest a bit."

"And we also don't have to starve or die of thirst", Duke said and opened a little door. "No one would leave the Pond with the Migrator if he doesn't know that the fridge is completely filled." He grabbed two bottles of water, gave Dive one then shoved another seat as close as possible to Dive's. Although he would have preferred sitting directly beside him, there would have never been enough space for them both on just one seat. He put his arms around the other one; the young drake nuzzled his chest. It wasn't the most comfortable position on those two seats but it was okay to both of them. Slowly they drifted away into sleep.

Nosedive was woken up by the engine noise of the Migrator. How long had he slept? It seemed like the light here was always staying the same. Duke was sitting behind the wheel, steering through between the walls. From time to time he had to take a turn again and try out another way.

"Wow, this looks like you want to drive through a completely unknown city without a map and without reading the direction signs."

"Oh, you're finally awake?"

The teenager switched place to the co-driver's seat. "You could have crashed a few walls instead of searching around."

"Didn't want to wake you up. Hey, it looks like we're picking up some strange signal just three walls away from here. So if you are awake now I can tear them down."

The straight way led them to a big area. Nothing was there except a crystal in the middle that looked like a large version of the one Siege had used. The two climbed out of the Migrator and approached carefully.

Duke wandered around it, even touched its surface.

"A thing like that brought us here so it also should be able to get us back. The question is how."

"Dive, can you hear me?"

The young drake looked at his communicator as if he had never seen it before.

"Wingster?"

"Yes, wherever you are, we found a way to get you back. You only have to find a crystal like the one Siege used – we managed to get his back and made our own device."

"Already found one."

"That's good. We will activate it in a few seconds. You just have to touch it to get back."

"What about the Migrator?"

"It will be transferred with you as long as it isn't further than five meters away."

"It's parking nearly in front of it."

"Okay, we're getting this thing ready. I have to disconnect now. Wildwing over."

"Alright, let's hope this works", Nosedive said. He sounded nervous. Duke wrapped his

fingers around the others hand and gave him a warm smile.

"Don't worry, it will."

"Uhm ... there's just one more thing to ask before we return. Is it okay for you, that we appear as friends only again? At least on the outside, when we're around the others. I don't know if I'm ready for an outing yet."

"Sure." The grey drake gave him a last sweet kiss. "I'll give you time and wait until you feel sure enough."

"Thanks. Then let's go."

They let each others hand loose then turned around and touched the crystal. The familiar storm was starting again. They were on their flight back to Anaheim.