

DRAGON'S RETRIBUTION

Characters and Text © 2001, L Gelling

It was a hard slog up the mountain. The path they were following was windy and narrow, sometimes blocked by a fall of rock from the heights above. Sparse vegetation brought scant visual relief to the desert-like landscape of the Duba plains.

"Are you sure it's safe?" asked Calum, stepping over a large rock that sat in the middle of the path. "I mean, I know that the dragon goes out every afternoon, but what if he doesn't this time? What if he stays home and counts his money, or something?" He brushed aside a wisp of blonde hair that kept falling down across his face with annoyance. "Damn hair."

"I keep telling you that it's perfectly safe. We've been watching him for over a week, and so far he has gone out every afternoon, and come back after three hours. We'll have plenty of time to nip in and grab something." The brown-haired Levi suddenly stopped as a small shower of stones rattled down from above them, then carried on. "There's more danger on this path than in the cave itself."

"You're not much of an optimist, are you? You could have stayed home, you know." Calum was starting to pant now; the path was getting steeper and steeper as they neared the summit of the mountain. "There it is," he said as he crested a small rise. He pointed at a tiny black opening in a cliff-face in the distance. Levi nodded as he came up beside his friend and looked for himself.

The two teenagers paused for a few minutes rest, just staring down at the surrounding desert, before continuing their arduous trek.

Nearly two hours later Calum and Levi reached their goal. "Wow," murmured Calum, standing before the entrance. "I thought the door would be much bigger than this." It was only twice his height, and about the same wide.

"Yes...all the wild tales we've heard have made them sound so massive," commented Levi as he went to the edge of the cave's ledge to peer down. He stepped back quickly, shuddering. "It's a long way down," he said, coming back over to Calum.

"What did you expect? We've just climbed a mile-high mountain, for heaven's sake." Calum sighed. His friend, for all his years, displayed a remarkable lack of wit sometimes. "Now, if we've timed our arrival right, he should be just about to leave his cave." The boy looked around for a good place to hide. "There, just behind those rocks." Calum strolled over to a large pile of fallen boulders that sat on the far end of the ledge. "Hopefully he won't smell us, or something."

The two boys lay in wait, not saying a word, their eyes on the darkness within the cave. "Shh! I think he's coming out!" whispered Levi, crouching down a bit more. "I can hear something moving around inside."

Sure enough, a few seconds later a wonderful, though intimidating, vision of beauty stalked out of the cave. The dragon was covered in scales of every shade of red imaginable, which reflected the afternoon light off their seemingly embossed surfaces. He had a lean muzzle, from the sides of which extended two long, pointed incisors. Eyes of rich sapphire blue scanned the area; the boys ducked down as far as they could, still keeping eyes on the dragon.

Most impressive of all were the wings. When the dragon had walked fully onto the ledge, he spread them out, flapping them slightly to ease kinks out of them. "They must be at least ten feet across, each of them!" Calum whispered sharply to Levi.

They watched with fascination as the dragon checked himself over, before stepping to the edge of the cliff. With a fluid movement he leaped off, free-falling for a couple of seconds before opening his wings with a loud snapping sound. He circled once, then drifted off to the west, in the direction of the ocean.

Levi and Calum stood up, watching the dragon disappear into the distance. "Wow..." murmured Calum, echoed by his friend. "He is so...beautiful." Levi agreed with a slow nod. He then took Calum's arm, and started pulling him towards the cave. "We'd might as well go in now, and have a look around."

Calum allowed himself to be dragged into the darkness of the dragon's cave. It got gradually darker but, as they went further in, the walls seemed to emit a gentle light of their own, as if they were slightly phosphorescent.

The long passage the boys were following finally opened out into a large cavern, its ceiling some hundred feet above them. Dim light shone down from some unknown source. On the far side a small waterfall trickled down from halfway up the wall, forming a lake which, presumably, drained into an underground tunnel.

Scattered neatly around the perimeter of the cavern were what appeared to be piles of junk. "What is all this supposed to be?" asked Levi, inspecting a pile of what seemed to be anchors. "Where's all the gold? Silver? Jewels?"

"Ah...Levi, have you heard the phrase, 'One man's trash is another man's treasure' by any chance?"

Levi blinked. "Yeah. Why?" He peered at Calum for a few seconds, before the penny dropped. "Oh. You mean...what we consider as junk, the dragon thinks as treasure?" At Calum's answering nod he groaned. "All this way for nothing!"

"Wait a minute. There might still be something we could find...interesting in here," remarked Calum, looking around at all the piles. "Who knows? We could stumble across an ancient artefact or something in all this." He turned and went over to a small pile of rocks that shone dimly in the subdued light. Picking one up, he turned it over in his hands, inspecting it. "Hmm...you know more about gemstones than I do. Do you think this is one? I know they look like this before they're cut, but...." He trailed off, and handed the stone to Levi.

"By the looks of it I'd say it was...hmm, a diamond, I think. About...forty carats, if I'm any judge." A big smile crossed his face. "Perhaps you're right...there are interesting things in here. What say we take a few of these home? We could sell them for a fair profit."

"I guess so...but let's see if there's anything else worth taking. Even anchors, if we could lift them, would be worth a bit in the scrapyards."

"Well...you take this side, and I'll go over to the other. Between us we should rustle up some goodies," said Levi. The two grinned at each other, then went apart to explore more fully the 'riches' of the dragon's cave.

The hours went by quickly. By the cavern's exit the boys formed their own little pile, of stuff they could carry easily down the hazardous mountain trail to their home village. "I think that should be enough," said Calum, dropping a final load onto the pile. "I just hope we can carry it, that's all."

"Well, if we can't, we'll just have to leave behind the things that might not bring a price," Levi said critically. "Maybe we should just take a few gemstones; they alone are worth a small fortune."

"True enough, I suppose." Calum sighed, then began to fill a sack he had taken from a trouser pocket. "Pack the smaller stuff first; that way we won't have to cope with too much weight, but still take a lot with us."

The boys worked quickly, and in minutes they had filled their sacks, with some leftover. "That'll do. Now, let's hot-foot it out of here before the dragon comes back." They happened to be facing the inside of the cavern, so they didn't notice a large shadow moving up behind them.

A bit late for that, I think. A gentle mental voice, with a hint of stone about it, echoed around their minds, stopping them in their tracks.

Neither Calum nor Levi moved so much as a muscle. "Uh-oh..." muttered Calum, feeling a hot wind blowing over him. Levi took that moment to turn around, and found himself staring up at a large red-scaled muzzle, down which a pair of deep blue eyes were looking, directly at him. "Oh, gods," he said before fainting.

Calum was made of sterner stuff than his friend was, but he was still scared beyond what he thought was humanly possible. He tried to say something, but couldn't – his mouth and throat had dried up, making speech difficult. "Um...hi," he finally managed to croak.

Hello yourself, young human. The dragon peered down at the comatose Levi, sprawled on the dusty ground. ***Your friend is afraid, yes?***

“Ah...yeah...like me,” Calum said, fighting his body’s urges to run away. Where could he run to? “He’s not used to seeing...dragons close up.”

Hmm, yes, that does make sense. Now, aside from that small matter, what, may I ask, are you doing here in my cave? The voice developed a tinge of curiosity, with an odd sensation of the colour yellow. *I’m sure it was not a social call.*

Calum swallowed hard, and thought frantically for a plausible excuse. Not coming up with any, he went with the truth. “We...ah, came up here to take a few things. You know the stories about dragons hoarding treasure...”

The dragon nodded, an oddly human gesture. *Yes, I know what you mean. In part, that is true. But, as I’m sure you’ve found, some of us consider other material things more important than just precious stones and metals.* He looked Calum up and down, his blue eyes seeming to peer right into his heart and soul. *This transgression of privacy cannot go unpunished, you realise.*

“Of course. Um...what will you do to us?” Calum asked in a very small voice. A variety of possible options opened themselves up to his mind, none of them very pleasant.

A strange rumbling sound started coming from the dragon’s throat. *Like laughter,* Calum thought. *I hope it’s good laughter.*

I could eat you. Others of my kind keep intruders for amusement. A few send them back home... Calum felt the beginnings of hope rise up in him, but they were dashed a moment later as the dragon continued. *...unable to bear children. You look like a smart boy. I’m sure I don’t have to explain what I mean.*

“No...no, you don’t.” Calum’s face had paled visibly. “What kind of dragon are you?” he asked a few seconds later, out of a desperate need to stall for time.

The dragon smiled, achieved by pulling the corners of his mouth up, exposing a few teeth. *I happen to be one of the amusable kind. However, my amusements are a little more than just fun and games.*

Calum sat down, feeling weak. “What...what do you mean?”

Well, being so isolated from my fellow dragons -- most of civilisation, really -- I don’t get much sexual relief. A tinge of red came into the dragon’s eyes as he looked at Calum, whose mouth had dropped open. *I’d like very much to feel the hot rush of orgasm again, as I have not for the past century or two.* He stared at the teenager pointedly. *I offer you a proposal. If you will pleasure me to the point of climax, then you and your friend may leave, taking as much as you can carry.*

“What if we can’t, or won’t?” asked Calum, his voice loaded with concern for his well being.

The dragon thought for a few moments before replying. *You and your friend must bring each other pleasure. Perhaps some visual stimulus will help me bring myself to my peak.* A tone of warmth seemed to infuse the dragon’s mental voice.

“Ah...” Calum looked down to his friend, who was still out cold on the ground. “I don’t really mind that idea, myself...but I think *he* might. He’s not...of the same mind.”

I see, said the dragon. *Is he likely to stay unconscious long?* he asked then, turning his gaze back to Levi. *I understand why he fainted, but he might have sustained some injury to his head when he collapsed. One or two who have...stopped by suffered mild concussion.*

“I don’t think so; his head is pretty hard.” Calum suddenly grinned. “Um...I don’t think we’ve properly introduced ourselves, either. We might as well, if we have to spend some time together. I’m Calum, and he’s Levi, my best friend.” The boy gestured to the prostrate form on the ground. “What about you?”

The dragon chuckled with a loud rumble. *Many call me the Red Devil, but I am also known as Ty’xenu’in, or Ty for short.* Ty stepped further into the cave, and Calum could see the full extent of his body. “You’re very handsome, you know,” stated Calum, meaning every word.

Thank you, Calum. I appreciate that remark. I have been called many words, but ‘handsome’ is very rarely heard. As if to show off he moved slowly into the cave, letting the light from above reflect off his vari-hued red scales. *Would you like something to eat or drink? I keep a small supply available for such occasions.*

“Yes, please,” replied Calum, only now just realising that it had been a long time since they had eaten breakfast. “What do you have?”

Ty wandered across to one wall, and pressed against it with one claw. The wall pushed back and slid aside with a grating noise to reveal an opening, about four feet wide on all sides. Calum stepped up to peer inside. Several bottles, most likely containing liquor of some description, were clustered at the back, and in front of those were a number of smoked fish and a couple of loaves of bread. *It's not much*, said Ty, *but I hope it will suffice*.

The boy nodded. “It’s just fine. The fish is, anyway. I’m not sure about the bottles. Where did you get this stuff from? I can’t imagine you going into a town and trading for it.”

Yes, that is a point, said Ty. *I have a few...human friends, and they occasionally bring me edibles, having been in your position themselves at one stage. It was their idea, actually, that I should keep some titbits hidden away for other times. The fish was brought up about a fortnight ago, and I was assured that it would keep for a few weeks.*

Calum blinked. “Ah, I see. Well, that was definitely a good idea. I’m sure Levi will appreciate it when he wakes up.” He looked back at his friend, who suddenly moved an arm. “Speaking of which...” He went over to provide assistance in getting up. “Are you okay?”

“I...I’m fine, I guess.” Levi stared oddly at Calum, then rubbed his head. “Uh...where’s the dragon?” His voice spoke volumes about his enthusiasm.

“Ty? He’s over there,” said Calum, gesturing at the dragon on the cavern’s far side. “Levi, that is Ty. Ty, meet Levi. Not the bravest person in the world, but...who can fault him for that?” He pulled Levi, who protested faintly, back over to the dragon. “Are you hungry? There’s some bread and fish here, and some wine...I think it’s wine, anyway.”

Most definitely wine, Ty assured them. *The two humans who brought these up tasted each of them before they left. I may be big, but I’m not stupid.* Ty’s mental voice was coloured with the yellow of amusement. *Of course, they might have taken antidotes, but I convinced them that poisoning the wine was likely to lead to more serious harm to their bodies.*

Calum chuckled. “I’ll bet you did. Come on, Levi. Help yourself.” With that, the boy reached into the hole and withdrew a fish. Pulling a piece off, he popped it into his mouth and chewed thoughtfully. “A little on the salty side, but I think that’s a result of the curing process.”

You seem very knowledgeable, Calum, observed the dragon. *I find that a most attractive trait in anyone, dragon or otherwise. Some others I have met had abominable conversational skills – they couldn’t talk their way out of the proverbial paper bag. It’s nice to meet such a well-mannered, and well-taught, person as yourself.*

Calum’s face went slightly red. “Ah, thank you, Ty. No-one’s ever said that about me before.” He continued to eat, joined shortly by a hesitant Levi, who ripped into the bread.

When they had finished, and were satisfied, Ty sealed up the ‘safe’ and looked intently at the two boys. *Now that you have dined, perhaps you’d like to make a start on paying off your ‘exit fee’?* Ty’s tone was warm, but with a strangely hard edge to it. His mental colour was bright yellow, with a tinge of steel grey. *The sooner you do it, the sooner you’ll get home. I’m sure your families are worried about you.*

Calum and Levi glanced at each other. “He’s right, you know,” said Calum. “I never told my parents where I was going – I just left a note saying that I would be back soon.”

“Same,” replied Levi. The two boys looked up at Ty’s face. His eyes had taken on a tinge of red, giving them a purple colour. “Er...any ideas on how to get started?” Levi asked.

I will help you, Ty said. He turned himself so that his back was to the wall, then leaned back against it, spreading his large wings out to either side. When he was comfortable, he reached down at began to lightly stroke his lower abdomen. From a slit that hadn’t been previously visible emerged a pink tip, which gradually grew into a long meaty cock, about seven feet long, ranging from light pink at its tip to dark red at its base. “That’s huge!” exclaimed Calum, his eyes widening. “That’s just...jeez!”

Tentatively, the boy carefully clambered up onto the dragon’s body, to wrap his hand as far around the fleshy shaft as he could manage – barely halfway. “This feels so weird,” remarked Ca-

lum, glancing down at Levi with an odd grin on his face. “It’s...quite warm, a little slippery. It’s like holding a thick snake – except this one won’t try to bite me.”

Ty smiled in his draconic way, watching Calum gently discover his cock. ***Levi, why don’t you come up here and join him?*** he asked, looking directly at him. ***He can’t do this on his own.***

Levi looked unsure, but did as he was bid, shinnying up to rest on Ty’s massive abdomen. “Wow...that *is* big,” he whispered, almost unconsciously taking a hold of the dragon’s cock and squeezing it lightly. “I like how it feels,” he said in a low voice to Calum, his face going red with embarrassment. “What about you?”

“Me? Well...” Calum deigned not to say anything else. Instead he shuffled up to the tip of the shaft, and began to kiss and lick it, stroking the head lightly with his hands. The central hole was much like it was in his own maleness, but large enough to insert most of his hand. He did so, noticing that Ty was rumbling quietly in pleasure. ***Very good, Calum,*** he mused, his eyes shining.

“Uh...thanks, I think,” Calum replied, rather pleased. He glanced briefly at Levi, who looked back with raised eyebrows. “You’re enjoying this aren’t you?” he asked pointedly, in spite of the fact that his own hands were caressing the hard length of dragon flesh tenderly.

Calum grinned and nodded. “I am, actually.” He stopped moving his hand in and out of Ty’s cockhole, and began stroking the massive head of the dragon’s member. The body beneath the two boys shuddered, causing them to look up in alarm. ***Don’t worry,*** Ty replied, ***I’m only shivering in pleasure. You are doing very well. I have not felt this good in many decades.***

There was a minute or two of silence while Calum and Levi administered to the dragon’s sexual needs, before Ty spoke up again. ***Since you have seen the physical representation of my masculinity, do you not think it fair that I also see yours?*** The dragon stared down his muzzle, his eyes shining a brilliant blue.

“He’s right, I guess,” Levi said to Calum, shrugging. “Besides...I’m, er, feeling a little confined, myself.” With a look up at Ty, the boy started stripping off, tossing his shirt and pants down to the ground in quick succession. “How do I look to you?” he asked, of the dragon and his friend.

Calum blinked, looking his best friend up and down, his gaze resting longest on the seven inches of maleness jutting up from his crotch. “Beautiful,” he murmured before he could stop himself. “Uh...I mean...oh, what the heck.” Calum left Ty’s cock to grab Levi and engage him in a long kiss.

Levi’s eyes opened wide with a mixture of emotions flooding through him. Mostly it was shock, but part of him found it a loving gesture, and before he quite knew what he was doing he clasped his arms around Calum’s body, holding him to his own.

Very nice. Ty’s mental voice was infused with a warm understanding. ***I find it pleasing to see that you care so deeply for your friend, Calum. You are very lucky, Levi, to have a person care for you so much.***

The kiss was finally broken, mainly to let both boys get a breath. “I guess, but...” Levi trailed off, unsure of what to say. “I knew you liked me, Calum, but...I had no idea that you took so much more interest in me. Have you always felt this way about me?” He gazed into his friend’s eyes, searching for any hint of falsity.

“Almost ever since puberty, actually,” Calum replied, smiling wryly and blushing. “When we were younger, and used to swim naked in the pond, I used to think that you had a nice body...and an even nicer cock. I knew you wouldn’t feel the same way – so I learned to hide my feelings from you. I didn’t know how you would react if you knew.”

“I understand,” Levi said, his emotions churning about inside him. “I wish I could say the same, that I love you, but...I just don’t know any more.” He turned away from Calum, feeling embarrassed, ashamed and nervous. “I feel so...dirty.”

Calum moved up to put an arm gently around his friend’s shoulders. “Levi, it’s all right. If you can’t love me back, that’s fine, but just know that I love you, and that nothing can change that.” He pulled Levi closer, feeling his friend’s smooth skin against his arms.

Levi’s body began to shake as he went into a fit of uncontrollable sobbing, suddenly turning to cling to Calum like a baby to its mother. “I don’t know what to *do!*” choked Levi, his voice muffled in his friend’s chest. “I’ve never had to deal with anything like this!”

“Just think with your heart, not your mind,” Calum murmured, rubbing Levi’s back in what he felt was a comforting gesture. “No matter what your brain says, ultimately it is the heart that wins out. Whatever it decides, I’ll be there for you.”

The sobs gradually grew lesser, until Levi was merely sighing into Calum’s shirt. He lifted his head, looking with reddened eyes into Calum’s. “Please...I want to be loved. Not by my family, not by my dog, but by *you*.”

“Your heart has spoken?” came the gentle question. Calum looked into Levi’s eyes, his ‘window to the soul’, searching for a sign that it was indeed his heart that had spoken those words.

“It has.” Levi then leaned forward, rather hesitant, his lips aiming for Calum’s, which drew nearer, until the two met in a long embrace. While their lips were occupied, Calum slipped out of his clothes, unbuttoning his shirt and throwing it aside, before somehow removing his pants, which joined the shirt a few seconds later.

Ty watched with slowly whirling eyes of pale blue, moved by the two friends’ acceptance of each other. *Move up here to my stomach*, he suggested to them. *It will be far more comfortable, and safer*.

“Thank you,” murmured Calum, taking Levi’s hand and pulling him gently up to where the dragon’s body flattened out a bit, a few feet forward of his cock. They lay down together, kissing again, while running their hands over each other’s body. “May I...may I make love to you?” whispered Calum softly to his friend before they kissed again. “I’ve dreamed of doing so for ages, but...I don’t want to force you into anything you might regret.”

Levi looked into Calum’s eyes, still unsure of himself. “I don’t know if I’m ready for that...it will hurt, won’t it?” At Calum’s nod he sighed, looking away for a few moments before turning back. “All right, but...if I decide not to go through with it...” He trailed off nervously.

“I’ll understand.” Calum spit on his hand, and rubbed it over his cock, looking up at Levi as he did so. “Okay...get on top, and grab hold of my cock. Guide the head to your anus, then lower yourself down onto it. Take your time. *It will hurt*, but not for long. Trust me.”

The other boy looked rather frightened now, but he gamely followed his friend’s directions. He gasped as the first inch of Calum’s cock was forced into his tight hole. “Ow...this hurts so much!” He stopped, wondering if the pain was worth it, then decided to continue, for Calum. Agonisingly slowly he lowered himself another inch or so, wincing at the incredible pain he was feeling at the penetration.

Calum smiled at Levi, stroking his arms. “The pain will go away. You’ve just got to relax.” He resisted the urge to thrust upwards, embedding his prick to the hilt inside his friend, now his lover. He knew what Levi was going through, and didn’t want to worsen it for him.

Finally Levi felt the head of Calum’s cock emerge into his rectum, the rest of his length quickly following. “Gods, that *hurts!*” His butt felt full, as if he needed to relieve himself. “How can you stand it?”

“I thought exactly the same thing during my first time. Just lie down on top of me, and let your body relax. You’ll loosen up after a while, believe me.” Calum gently helped Levi to lean forwards, until he was resting against his chest. “That’s it...just relax, and concentrate on...I don’t know, me. Kiss me again,” he added with a smile.

Levi did so, wincing again as his rectal muscles protested the movement. His lips sought Calum’s, pressing against them firmly as Calum embraced him once again. He was still of two minds about this situation, but as Calum slipped his tongue into his mouth to slide against his own, he started wondering if it really wasn’t that bad after all. Aside from the pain in his butt, he was beginning to enjoy the interaction with his best friend.

Ty smiled to himself, reaching down past the two lovers with a clawed ‘hand’ to stroke his erection. It had been a long time since he had had the inclination to masturbate, and he was determined to make the most of this special occasion. He could feel the precum flowing already, making his cock slick.

As he watched, Levi raised himself off his partner a little, then sank back down, repeating the motion slowly. His expression was still pained, but it was a lot less agonised. The movements

gradually increased in tempo; Calum's cock was showing more and more as Levi bounced up and down on it. With his superior vision, the dragon could clearly see the point of action, where Calum's member slipped in and out of Levi's rectum like a well-greased piston. Ty's 'hand' stroked his cock, from base to tip, moving faster as he felt the beginnings of a powerful orgasm.

Riding Calum's prick, Levi felt much more at ease. The pain he had felt in the beginning had dulled to a slight ache, and he was now actually enjoying himself. "You were right," he said to his friend, smiling wryly. "It does feel pretty good."

"See? I told you." Calum grinned up at Levi, then reached down to grab the cock bobbing around in front of him. Closing his hand around it, he started moving his hand up and down its length, eliciting a quiet moan from Levi.

The dragon and the two boys concentrated on their pleasurable activities for another couple of minutes, working themselves up to the point of release. The only sounds to be heard were quiet rumblings from Ty, the moans of Calum and Levi, and the slapping sounds their contact made.

Finally the tension broke. Crying out in ecstasy, Calum suddenly bucked upwards into his friend's butt and let go, feeling his thick semen spurt out in powerful bursts. Levi followed a few seconds later, the warm sensation of his lover's ejaculation triggering his own. A series of long jets of white cum shot from his prick arcing up to land on Calum's chest and abdomen, before dribbling out down his shaft.

Ty was much more vocal, letting out a roar that deafened the boys and made a few stalactites drop from the ceiling to smash onto the ground below. From his seven-foot cock was ejected a massively thick stream of pale blue semen, which arched over the boys' heads and splattered onto his upper chest. More followed, painting the dragon's body in blue. Eventually Calum and Levi got covered too, as the dragon's orgasm finished. Calum received some of the sticky goo right in his mouth, much to his surprise; he swallowed it, then smiled. "This is pretty good. Try some!"

Raising his eyebrows, Levi wiped his hand through some of the light blue cum, and tentatively licked it. "Salty...but with a hint of...cinnamon?" He grinned, then leaned forward to lick the rest off Calum's face.

The three rested for a few minutes, exhausted by the exertions. "We look a right mess," said Calum, glancing down at himself. Ty's semen had dried somewhat to a congealed blue paste, stickier than any glue he'd come across. "We'd better get cleaned up."

With some effort the boys managed to pry themselves apart, sheepish grins on their faces, and dismount to the ground, heading for the lake to wash themselves off. Ty watched them go with an inward smile. *You were very good*, he commented to both, infusing his mental tone with brightness. *Not only did you manage to fulfil my request of you, but you also found each other.*

It took several minutes for Calum and Levi to clean off the seminal residue from their bodies, after which they padded back to stand beside the dragon. "Thank you, Ty," said Levi, with a shy glance at Calum. "We're glad we helped you with your...problem, and I guess...we're glad that we're together as more than best friends."

Ty nodded. *It was my pleasure, in more ways than one*, he said wryly, chuckling with a throaty rumble. He then added in a more serious tone, *As much as I'd like you to stay, I think it is about time for you to get back to your homes. Your families will be worried.*

"Yes...mine will be frantic, I'll bet. My sister wouldn't mind, probably, but still..." Calum sighed, then went to pick up his clothes. "I don't know *what* I'm going to tell them, and I'll probably be grounded for a few weeks...."

The items that you leave with should be a sufficient enough excuse to let you off the hook, Ty said, gesturing with a claw at the cave entrance, where the bags the boys had filled still rested.

Levi slowly put on his clothes, thinking. He really didn't want to leave the friendly dragon, but at the same time he wanted to get home to his family – and dinner. "May we come visit again?" he asked, looking up at Ty's face.

If you wish to, by all means drop by. Just make sure I'm home first. Ty laughed, a loud rumble echoing around the cave. *And don't take anything without being invited to.*

“Fair enough. Well...we’d better go, Levi. Thank you again, for the...er, wonderful afternoon,” Calum said, nodding at Ty. “We’ll be seeing you again soon.” With that the boys went over to the far side of the cave, picked up their bags, and started walking out. “Bye!” called Levi before they disappeared into the tunnel.

The dragon sighed, with some regret. *Goodbye, for now.* He watched them leave, before slowly getting to his feet, to wash himself off in the pool.

“That was actually...well...not as bad as I thought it would be,” said Levi to Calum as they negotiated the treacherous path down the mountain. “I mean...I was scared of Ty to start with, then I was scared of...well, *you* when you.... And the pain!”

“But it all worked out in the end, didn’t it?” Calum stepped around a large rock that had fallen down since they had passed in the opposite direction. “So how do you feel about me now? Still want to be just best friends, or...” Calum trailed off, trying to think of a suitable word.

“Boyfriends? Well...I don’t really see any reason why not. It might take me a while to get used to the idea, though.” Levi kicked a small stone out of his way, which skittered over the edge of the cliff.

Calum smiled, and hugged Levi. “I’m a patient person. I’ve waited this long; a few weeks or months more won’t matter much to me.” He shrugged the bag he was carrying into a more comfortable position.

Levi returned the smile. “Good.” He yawned, then said, “I wonder what our families will say. You think they’ll go through the roof?”

“I hope not – think of the damage they’ll do to it.” Calum grinned then laughed. “Anyway...we’d better move faster than this if we want to get home before dinner.” He picked up the pace, leaving Levi a few steps behind.

“Hey! Wait for me! I’ve got two bags to carry!” Levi hurried to catch up, while Calum ran ahead of him, laughing, around a corner, out of sight.