

A Dragon's Seasons

by Varena Ronald

Winter Lights

I sped across the icy blanket, laughing and gasping for air—my face flushed—breathing warm puffs of steam, Blossom at my side dashing around, seeing snow for the first time, just like me, I thought, always just like me. She slid suddenly and tried to regain her balance, using her powerful tail to swipe through a snowdrift, a burst of powder hitting me squarely in the face. I ran at her, a ball of snow bundled in my mittens. I hurled it and she lifted both wings instinctively and the ball collided, a flower of snow blooming across her scales. Blossom bowled into my arms and I rubbed her all over. “Dragon, dragon dragon,” I said and she let out a small noise and we lay back into the white expanse. The sky spread out in an everlasting contrast, the grey of the evening sun reflected everywhere, glistening off the small flakes of ice swirling and twirling around and around and around. I drew in my breath, held it, then let it out, the cloud melting into the sky and I was left with only the apricity of the sun on my skin. Blossom shook herself and spread her wings, covering me with snow. “Blossom!” I laughed again, and she did, too, in her animal joy. We stood and brushed off the ice dust. I held out my hand hoping to catch a snowflake and watched it disappear as it drew near. Blossom stuck out her tongue, but the frost was swept away in a small whirlwind of her own breath. Then I looked up into the flurry of snow crystals glittering and shining, none like another, caught in the light of the north. We stood, both entranced by the dazzle, silence resounding in our ears. Then I heard a call and Blossom bounded away toward the warmth and the smell of cooking, me close on her trail. Leaving the imprints of us, still watching the light.

Spring Rain

I opened my eyes slowly. The frigid air swept over me, crisp and refreshing. It parted my hair from my face but I still couldn't see past the wind. Waves of sound rolled overhead and the clouds clattered as they rammed into each other, rumbling constantly, like the sound of tearing paper. Then all hushed, as if by stepping out into the cobblestones I had invaded their conversation. The streets were deserted, and Blossom drooped her ears, wide eyes looking at me; she clearly wasn't convinced. “Oh, I'll show you”, I said leaping into the middle of the street.

I raised my head to the heavens and let my voice ring out, "It's spring!" My voice bounced off the walls, collided with the stone, and threw itself into the sky. It seemed to shift something, because just then a big raindrop fell and hit Blossom on the nose. I couldn't help but giggle. Blossom glared at me and ventured into the street before a second raindrop came down and hit on the small crescent on her forehead. I pulled out my umbrella, but it was too late. From high in the sky the rain crashed down on me and we were drenched.

I cast aside the frail cloth umbrella and swooped in to grab Blossom. But the dragon shook herself free, cascading crystal droplets this way and that. I laughed again and pulled my coat closer before shaking my hair in the dragon's direction. Blossom darted away and jumped in the nearest puddle, sending the water up up up. Dancing in the air, the beads hung for what felt like an eternity.

We jumped and scuttled between the curtains of rain, prancing to the endless beat of the water as it shattered on the smooth rocks. The globes shimmered as they leapt up as diamonds sparkling, shining. The cold could never reach my bones. We danced to the music, the everlasting rhythm of life that twirled and twirled and would not let go. The growing, unheard beneath the stones, surged to rise to life's calling, sprouting, stretching to burst, to bloom, to bellow its call. Spring had come.

Summer Stars

'Chirp' chirp' chirp' chirp' I awoke to the sound of crickets. Blurs of pale orange played on my eyelashes. The endless field seemed to glow golden, shining with the last light of day. The summer sunset dwindled, bringing twilight to the land. Dusk was descending now, the waning rays of the sun giving way to the cloak of night. It sped across the sky dropping stars into the grass and inky sky. The grass whistled in sweeps, cut by the sharp wind which sent waves of silver over their backward-bending stalks. The trees and leaves rustling far from here waved their goodbyes. Blossom slept soundly at my side, her breath rising and falling in a peaceful beat. I stroked her scaled head and the dragon stirred and I wrapped my arms around her small body. I lay my hair between the waves and watched the world upside down, humming with the throng of life. Insects buzzed around us and as the fireflies drifted through the air, I felt Blossom's heart begin to beat faster. In moments she had shot out of my grip and enthusiastically into the sky. She twirled around, chasing bugs into the corners of the night. She

soared to meet the heavens, only visible by the absence of the stars. She stalked her prey in a whirling dance, swiping at fireflies and spots. She spiraled up into the darkness and climbed and climbed and climbed, until for a moment I thought I had lost her to the constellations. The light of the world had withdrawn from the ground, leaving the light of the flies and the shimmer of the grass. Only when she turned to look at me—silhouetted against the moon, the light pooled in her eyes—was she returned to me, shining as the brightest star herself. She dropped from the horizon and glided once more gently, hanging in the air above me, before plopping herself onto my stomach. “Blossom!” I began to turn, but the dragon had nuzzled herself deep into my arms. I sighed. A cloud came over the moon and the energy in me ebbed, too, a million shades of black swimming before my eyes. And then night was forgotten.

Fall Dreams

The sun had never shone so brightly. Not in the clear skies of winter, not in the new days of spring, not even in the amaranthine daylight of summer. We sat perched over the edge of the pond on a thick willow branch. I curled up in the nook where the bough met the trunk, sucking up its warmth on the cold and bitter day. It was early morning and the sun had barely crested the peak of the mountain before its light spilled everywhere, cascading onto the maple, yew and larch trees around me, sending a kaleidoscope of colors weaving through their fingers. I let my hand rest on a row of draping yellow leaves, dazzled by the array of nature's gallery. The wind was cold and crisp but caressing and it sung a soft song of departure to the birds of the north and the last days of warmth. Blossom had swung down and was prancing at the pond's side, trying to catch the busy dragonflies. Ever since the first day of autumn, I had had a churning feeling in my stomach. The days so long and so short, whizzing by like damselflies. When the world turned so fast but the sun still hung in the sky, it felt like these frosty sunlit mornings were endless.

Blossom leapt from the bank side, clambering up the tree branch and I was stirred from my nostalgia as she tugged on my shirt, and finally took flight. She was silhouetted against the canopy and the leaves behind her looked like stained glass. Then she turned and dove into the pond, disturbing the once serene surface. Her small snout poked just above the top and her wide eyes beckoned me to come. Smiling, I got up. Gripping a resilient branch above me, I stepped off the tree. The wood bent in a wide arc, slowly letting me down like a big sister. The water had stilled again and when my toe finally pricked the hyaline a ripple chased itself into the

reeds around the bank. I hung there above the middle of the pond, feet lightly placed on the plane. I heard the traveling birds and the busy squirrels—so much life—but the silence was almost stifling. Then Blossom scattered a shower of water onto me and my clothes were wet and I let go. As I plummeted into water, I felt as if I was entering another world. It was cold and it was gripping, and when I came back up again and stood my shoulders rose above the threshold and all I could see was gold. The branch had snapped back with such force that it had shaken the tree, sending sunset leaves to coat the surface, aurous flakes gleaming against the sun, falling falling falling.

We hauled ourselves from the pond. I felt so heavy, my head and shoulders weights. I flopped onto the soft grass and Blossom curled up next to me and we matched head to toe to tail tip. A wistful longing echoed in my head and I was sad for just a moment. But we still had this day, this week, this month. We still had this season, this morning, this fall.