
DRAGON SPAWN, Lupi 20

Chapter 9

excerpt by [Eileen Wilks](#)

10:15 p.m. PDT

“*This just in,*” said the professionally crisp voice issuing from the laptop’s speakers.

Lily had moved to the conference room, which held whiteboards with two lists of names—one of the confirmed dead and one for those still missing. Someone had fulfilled Lily’s prophecy by ordering pizza. Someone else had brought their laptop into the room so they could listen to one of the news sites while they pieced together what they could. They weren’t really working. They didn’t have enough data, and none of them were officially tasked with the investigation. But they had to do something.

Fielding was trying to get Lily to say that magic had definitely been involved—as if she knew!—when something in the newscaster’s voice caught her attention. Lily turned to look at the small laptop as if that would help her hear better.

“*We are receiving reports of a major explosion in the Hebei Province of China, near Beijing,*” the news anchor said. “*This may have been a nuclear explosion. I repeat—there may have been a nuclear explosion near the Chinese capital.*”

11:55 p.m. PDT

Lily watched the laptop intently, along with everyone else in the field office. The president had interrupted regular programming to speak to the country about the war that had just been averted. She spoke of “the great grief the American people feel for the lives lost” and praised the Chinese government for “listening to the wisdom of our dragon friends.”

There had been three dragons in China. Now there were two.

Lily kept thinking of what Grandmother had said about the bomb dropped on Sam’s lair: “Sun was in no real danger. They did not use nuclear weapons.”

Someone in China had.

The bomb had come from China's own arsenal, not from the United States—a fact the remaining two dragons had made clear to the Chinese authorities before they could push their version of the big red button. Unofficial estimates put the size of the bomb at 100 kilotons. Not the biggest sonofabitch around, but big enough.

The bomb hadn't hit the capital itself. The dragon who'd called himself Fa Deng had laired in a relatively unpopulated portion of the mountains east of Beijing, so initial casualties were low—low for such a calamitous event, that is. The dead probably numbered in the hundreds, with thousands of injured. Fallout was another story. Beijing lay in the direct path experts expected the fallout to be carried. The city and its environs were in chaos as eleven and a half million people all tried to leave at once.

Lily watched and listened, but the president didn't really have much to say. She wanted everyone to stay calm.

Lily snorted. That was going to happen. Maybe if . . . oh. *Oh!* She pushed to her feet, looking up.

“What is it?” someone asked.

“Don't you hear it?” But when she looked around, blinking moisture from her eyes, it was clear they didn't. How could they not? This wasn't mindspeech. It was audible, and she knew what it was. No one who'd ever heard this could mistake it for anything else.

It was, of all people, Ackleford who suddenly whispered, “My God.” And he, too, looked up, his face stricken.

“Come out,” Lily said to the rest, hurrying toward the door. “Come outside. You don't want to miss this.”

She didn't wait to see if they followed. They did, though. And that's how the entire complement of the FBI's San Diego Field Office came to be among those who heard it when every one of the world's dragons rose into the sky . . . and sang. Sang for their lost comrade or brother, enemy or friend, parent or child—for he might have been any of these things to one or more of them. Sang for the dragon that humans had known as Feng Da.

Some of them later denied having wept.



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