



The Girl with the Pearl Dragon

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Book 1 of the Pearl
Dragon Novels



The Girl with the Pearl Dragon
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chapter 1

THE DISCOVERY OF A LIFETIME

Surrounded by her breakfast's scattered remains and neatly arranged gear, Alora sat close to the dwindling campfire. The first rays of the sun began to peek over the horizon, spilling a gentle, warm glow across the forest. Beams of light filtered through the trees, casting a dotted pattern on the ground where Alora was camping. She moved about her campsite, methodically rolling up her woolen blanket and packing her gear with practiced ease. Each item had its place in her backpack, a testament to her many adventures.

The crisp morning air filled her lungs as she worked, carrying the faint, comforting scent of pine mixed with the lingering smoky aroma of last night's fire. The sounds of the forest coming to life surrounded her—the chirping of birds, the rustling of leaves, and the soft gurgling of a nearby stream.

With a final glance at her campsite to ensure nothing was left behind, Alora grabbed her pots, pans, and dishes and went to the stream. The cool, clear water ran over her hands as she washed each item, the rhythmic splashing melding with the stream's constant murmur. She took a moment to breathe deeply, savoring the fresh,

earthy scents of the morning and the tranquility of the natural world around her.

She could see the cave entrance behind a thicket of trees not far from where she stood. It loomed in her thoughts, a beacon of the unknown, calling to her adventurous spirit. With her gear packed and her campsite cleared, she felt a familiar excitement. Today was the day she would delve into the mysteries of the cavern she had heard so much about.

She stood up, the cool morning dew clinging to her clothes, and splashed off her backpack as she shouldered it. Each step towards the cave entrance released the earthy scent of damp moss and pine from the forest floor while a symphony of bird calls filled the air, gradually softening as she moved away from the forest and toward the cave's gaping mouth.

Alora lived for moments like this, and she was in her element. Her childhood was a tapestry of daring escapades, each thread a story of adventure that wove her legend in her family's lore. She was the child who climbed the highest trees, her small hands gripping the rough bark, eyes alight with triumph. She was the whirlwind that raced through the fields, laughter echoing, leaving a trail of daisies in her wake. Her parents would exchange knowing glances over dinner, smiles hiding their amazement and worry, as her grandparents chuckled, sharing tales of the day's adventures that stretched the limits of their patience but filled their hearts with pride. One story that stood out to her was the one her grandma used to tell with a chuckle. "One day, I came over and found Alora tied to a tree, looking dejected, with her dog by her side. Her mother tied her up to keep her at home while she did the laundry. It was quite a sight," her grandma would say, laughing every time she repeated the tale. These memories only served to fuel Alora's desire to explore and discover the unknown, and she had many adventures and stories

of exploring places where others dared not go in her short lifetime. Today was no different, as she set her sights on a cave many people avoided due to stories of monsters lurking within. Alora's determination to uncover the truth was strong despite the rumors of terrifying creatures and ghostly apparitions. She believed that these stories were nothing more than tall tales and that the cave held more wonder and beauty than any scary creatures.

Alora stepped into the damp, dark, and chilly cave, her curiosity and passion for exploration driving her forward. She knew that sometimes the sounds of trickling water or bats could be mistaken for something more sinister, but she was confident that this cave would be no different from the others she had explored. Venturing deeper into the shadowy recesses of the cave, she reached into the side pocket of her backpack, her fingers closing around a piece of chalk. With deliberate strokes, she marked a crude arrow on the cave wall, the white chalk stark against the dark, rugged stone. Each mark was a breadcrumb in this subterranean world, guiding her journey back to the surface. She paused momentarily, studying her handiwork, ensuring it was visible enough to catch her eye on her return. Satisfied, she tucked the chalk back into her pocket and continued onward, her path illuminated by the faint glow of her torch. As she crawled and climbed, the rough textures of the cave walls grazed her skin, each narrow passage and expansive chamber presenting a new sensory wonder. The air grew cooler and damper with each twist and turn, the distant dripping of water echoing like a whispered secret while the subtle mineral scent of the cave filled her lungs. Shadows danced across the cavern walls as her torch cast a warm, flickering light on the towering stalactites and stalagmites. Each step echoed softly, mingling with the distant drip of water, while the cool, earthy scent of the cave filled her lungs.

Emerging from the narrow confines of the passage, Alora stepped into a vast expanse that took her breath away. The path opened wide into a great hall, its ceiling lost in darkness, and a large, calm lake lay at its heart. The water was so still, so clear, that it seemed like a mirror, reflecting the sparse light of her torch and multiplying it thousandfold.

She found a stone by the water's edge, curiously shaped like a comfortable chair as if carved by nature for a weary traveler. Alora eased onto it, taking her water bottle out of her bag. She took a long, refreshing sip, her eyes roaming over the majestic scene. The lake stretched out before her, its surface so pristine that it felt almost otherworldly. In her mind, it could be bottomless, a hidden world, holding secrets in its depths that no light had ever touched.

Beside the lake, frozen waterfalls stood like silent sentinels, their icy tendrils capturing fleeting moments of fluid grace. They glittered in the dim light, casting ethereal reflections on the water's surface. Alora's thoughts drifted, wondering about the stories these frozen cascades could tell, the centuries they had witnessed, slowly growing with each passing winter.

With its lake and frozen waterfalls, this grand hall seemed to her like a sanctum, a hidden jewel beneath the earth. She imagined ancient creatures, long forgotten by the world above, gliding through the dark waters, their existence a secret known only to the depths. She felt like an intruder in a sacred space for a moment, yet there was also a sense of belonging, a connection to something timeless and profound.

With a deep sigh, Alora stood up, her moment of reflection giving way to the explorer's call within her. There was more to see, more to discover. With all its mystery and beauty, the lake was but a part of this underground wonderland. With renewed determination,

she turned her gaze forward, ready to delve deeper into the cavern's heart.

Once past the lake's serene expanse and the Great Hall's grandeur, the cave narrowed again, leading Alora into a corridor lined with curious markings. As her torchlight danced across the walls, it illuminated a series of drawings that seemed ancient yet strikingly vivid. There were images of animals unlike any she had seen above ground - creatures with elongated bodies and multiple sets of wings. These others with serpentine tails and eyes seemed to follow her movements.

Among these fantastical beasts were symbols and patterns, geometric in design, their meanings elusive yet significant. Alora ran her fingers lightly over the drawings, feeling the grooves etched into the rock. She wondered about the hands that crafted these images many years ago. Were they messages, warnings, or simply expressions of art from a long-lost civilization?

In one drawing, a figure stood tall, its form humanoid but adorned with what appeared to be feathers or scales. Around this figure, smaller beings seemed to gather, some in reverence, others in fear. Alora pondered the scene, a story unfolding in her mind about ancient rituals or forgotten deities.

For a moment, she entertained the thought that these drawings were a recent addition, perhaps a prank by previous explorers meant to add an air of mystique to the cave. But the patina of age on the drawings and the aura of authenticity surrounding them suggested otherwise. These were not the idle doodles of a modern visitor; they were relics of a bygone era, whispers from the past echoing in the silence of the cave.

With a mix of reverence and curiosity, Alora continued, the images etched in her mind, adding another layer to the mystery of this underground cavern.

As Alora ventured deeper into the cavern, she became enveloped in a labyrinth of passageways, each corridor weaving into the heart of the earth like the threads of a grand tapestry. To Alora, the paths seemed to stretch into eternity, an endless maze beneath the surface world. Every new path she followed was a revelation – underground rivers glinting with crystalline reflections, vast chambers that receded into consuming darkness; their walls were a canvas of flowstone patterns crafted over time.

Hours passed, and the rhythm of Alora's breath and steps and the occasional sound of dripping water made for a peaceful passage. Suddenly, a loud "gurgle, growl, gurgle" pierced the symphony, and Alora laughed. It was her stomach!!! She realized it must be later in the day. Seeking a moment's respite within the cave, Alora found a small, sheltered recess where she could rest. She unslung her leather pouch, feeling its lightness with a tinge of concern. Her provisions were running low, a realization that set her mind on careful planning. She pulled out a piece of dried meat and a small, hard loaf of bread. Biting into the bread, she rationed each piece thoughtfully, breaking off just enough to quell her hunger, reserving the rest for the journey ahead.

Next, she tended to her camping stove, a simple gadget of metal and stone essential for boiling water. It was more than just a tool for cooking; it was crucial for purifying the water she drew from the underground streams, a lifeline in this subterranean world. She placed a small pot over the flames, warming a broth made from dried herbs and a few remaining vegetables, the steam curling up into the cool cave air. Each sip of the warm broth offered both sustenance and comfort, a brief respite from the chill surrounding her.

Once Alora finished her modest meal, she carefully repacked her belongings, ensuring everything was in order. She then nestled into

a narrow alcove, just wide enough to lie down. Rolling out her woolen blanket, she wrapped herself tightly, seeking solace in its rough warmth. The nook, though cramped, offered a haven from the vast, echoing chambers of the cave. There, wrapped in her blanket, Alora's breathing slowed as she surrendered to a fitful sleep, serenaded by the whispers of the cave.

Pressing on after a small breakfast the following day, Alora faced a formidable chasm, seemingly impossible. But a clever idea emerged – a skill learned from helping her uncle on his ranch. With determination, she fashioned a lasso from her rope and hooked it onto a jutting stone on the other side. Pulling it taut, she secured it on her end and dragged herself across the gap, reluctantly leaving her lifeline behind; she could get the rope on her way back.

"At least it'll be there when I return," Alora muttered, her words echoing in the cave's depths. Yet, the cave had more surprises in store. She heard faint whispers, almost resembling words. "Hello?" Alora called out, but her voice bounced back as an eerie echo. A shiver raced down her spine. "There can't be anyone else down here," she mused, turning to face a narrow tunnel ahead.

She noticed a faint, otherworldly green light in the distance as she continued. It was unlike anything she had ever seen – not a flickering fire or a torch, but something mysterious and unsettling. Alora remained silent, unsure of what to expect after those strange voices. She extinguished her torch and gingerly crawled through the tight tunnel, wary of the twisting rock formations that threatened to trap her.

As Alora emerged into what seemed like a new world, she approached a deep underground lake; its beauty struck her. The water was a clear emerald color, and it seemed to be lit by a magical light coming from large crystals scattered about the cavern. The air

was warm here, unlike the cool and damp air she had grown accustomed to during her journey.

As she explored the cavern, she walked around a large stalagmite and saw a huge pearl-like object in a bed of crystals. With a gasp of awe, Alora stepped tentatively towards the object to get a closer look, her hands cradling the beautiful object but not touching it. The object was unlike anything she had ever seen before; the surface was covered in an array of beautiful colors that seemed to glow and change with every movement. Alora couldn't help but be drawn closer to this magical sphere of color and warmth. She reached out and touched the object, but to her surprise, it cracked and moved. Her heart lurched, sending a jolt through her veins. Gasping, Alora stumbled backward, losing her balance and landing on her bottom. She sat for a moment, bewildered, before regaining her footing. "A pearl shouldn't crack," she whispered, her voice quivering. "What is this?"

As she drew closer, a mix of awe and curiosity tingled in her fingertips. The air around the mysterious object vibrated with a faint, almost imperceptible hum, wrapping it in an aura of enigma. Alora felt a gentle warmth emanating from its surface as she extended her hand. The sensation was not just physical; it seemed to resonate within her, a comforting pulse that echoed in her very core.

She hesitated for a moment, her fingers hovering over the object. Then, with a mix of awe and trepidation, she gently touched it. To her surprise, the surface was warm and seemed to thrum with a living energy, like the steady beat of a heart. Alora's mind raced with possibilities. What could be inside this peculiar, pulsating sphere?

Her mind began to race as she considered the possibilities of the creature that could have laid such an enormous egg. The thought of the creature's size, strength, and characteristics inside the egg filled her with wonder and intrigue.

A gentle voice echoed in her mind, its tone warm yet unfamiliar. *"Fear not, for within this shell lies a kindred spirit drawn to your own gentle heart,"* said a gentle voice. Alora looked around wildly, her heart pounding, but saw nobody else in the chamber. She looked at the trembling egg again, mesmerized by its beauty and magical pull.

Then that same voice in her head, a voice she had never heard before, unfamiliar yet kind, *"My name is Kal, and I am the dragon inside this pearl."*



chapter 2

KINDRED SPIRITS

In that instant, the object cracked again, the sound sharp in the quiet of the cavern. Startled, Alora withdrew her hand, watching in wonder as the crack widened. Before her eyes, the object began to open, revealing what lay within.

As the pieces of the shell fell away, they unveiled a creature unlike any she had ever seen. It was large, with pearlescent scales that shimmered in the dim light and a pair of curious eyes that gazed at her. A sense of profound wonder struck Alora. Here, in the depths of the earth, she had discovered a living being, a creature of legend and lore.

She observed the creature, a myriad of questions running through her mind. How had it come to be here? What was it exactly? The creature seemed harmless; its gaze filled with as much curiosity as her own. Alora realized this was no ordinary discovery; it was a moment of connection with a being as mysterious as the caverns themselves.

"I hope I did not startle you, Alora," said Kal.

"How do you know my name, and how are you talking to me? I do not see your lips move," asked Alora.

"We have a bond now that lets me think, and you can hear me in your mind. Only you can hear my thoughts," said the dragon.

Alora's mind spun! A dragon that could hear her thoughts and had a bond with her? This was delightful and surprising. She began thinking of many half-formed questions but was unsure where to begin. Overwhelmed, she felt her energy drop and was suddenly exhausted and starving.

"I'm starving," she thought.

Kal smiled at her. *"I can hear your thoughts as well,"* he said as he walked to the lake's edge and dipped his hands into the water. Suddenly, several large fish appear in his hands.

"Can you start a fire?" asked Alora.

"No, I cannot do that," said Kal.

Alora hesitated momentarily, "Well, that's OK; I was just wondering if you could breathe fire." She pulled out her camp stove and shrugged, "I actually came prepared."

Alora cooked her fish, and Kal waited for her to finish and ate his fish raw. While Alora was cooking her fish, they talked and began to get to know each other.

After their meal of fish, Alora and Kal settled beside the tranquil lake, the calm waters reflecting the soft light within the cavern. As they rested, Alora found herself increasingly intrigued by her extraordinary companion. 'So, Kal, what can you do? What are your plans now that you're here?' she asked, her voice tinged with curiosity and wonder.

Kal's thoughts gently entered her mind: *"I am still discovering my abilities. As for plans, I have none yet. Everything seems new to me."*

Alora smiled, a plan forming in her mind. 'Would you like to explore this world together? There's so much I want to show you, so much we could discover.'

Kal's eyes sparkled with a newfound excitement. *'I would like that very much, Alora.'*

Their conversation continued, with Alora asking about his abilities and Kal expressing his curiosity about the world above. She learned that Kal could swim and suggested they take a dip in the lake. "This place is so magical. Even though I have traveled deeper, the water is much warmer than the last lake I found." The experience was exhilarating; swimming alongside a creature of legend was something Alora had never imagined.

As they swam, they spoke of many things - of Alora's adventures, dragons' legends, and the world that awaited them outside the cavern. During these moments, a bond of friendship and mutual respect was forged between them, a partnership of explorer and guardian.

Eventually, they returned to the shore, their spirits lifted by the shared experience. 'We need to find a way out,' Alora mused, looking up at the cavern's towering ceiling. 'I can go back the way I came in, but you're too big to fit through most spaces.'

Kal's confidence resonated in her mind. 'There must be a way for me to get out. I'll fly overhead while you look around for another way out.' He took to the air with a graceful leap, his wings cutting silently through the cavern's atmosphere.

Alora sent a thought to Kal for the first time, *"don't you need a light to see in the dark?"*

"No, I have night vision," Kal replied, and Alora noticed a change in his eyes as he turned away.

After a while, Kal sent a thought to Alora, *"I found a way out! A passageway up here is large enough for me to walk through, but it gets very hot, maybe a little too hot for you. I can carry you in the egg, which will protect you."*

After Kal returned and landed, Alora quickly climbed into the most significant piece of the broken egg. Kal picked up the egg, cradling it against his chest to keep Alora safe as he struggled to fly

with the added weight and awkwardness of the egg. The young dragon managed to fly up to the tunnel's opening, where he could walk for a while before climbing a short, sloped area of loose rock. After a short while, he walked out into a cavern above with some small, hot lava flows and into another tunnel leading to a crater on the mountaintop. When he finally reached the top of the blackened mountain, he gently placed the egg fragment down. Alora was astonished to find herself on top of a dormant volcano.

"I never realized I had traveled so far underground and reached Mount Infern!" Alora exclaimed in disbelief. "Wow! What else can you do, Kal?"

"Well, I can do most of the things other dragons can do except breathe fire. I don't have that ability," Kal replied.

Alora interrupted. "I don't think there are any other dragons, at least not around here, so I don't know what a dragon does. I've only heard tales of dragons; none were friendly like you."

Kal said thoughtfully, *"Maybe I am the last one. There were good and bad dragons before and during my time before I became one myself."* Alora's eyes widened in question, and Kal continued, *"Yes, I was once a person like you, except I was a boy before I was a dragon and then a dragon in an egg. I must have been in that egg for a very long time if dragons are now only legends. I wonder how long it has been?"* He gazed off into the distance with a sad expression, thinking of all that must have happened while he was in the egg. *"What year is it, Alora?"*

"It is 1003 AD, why?" Alora replied.

"I have been in that egg for over 700 years." After a few moments, his eyes slid back to Alora's curious expression, and he continued. *"Oh, you asked me what I can do as a dragon, and we got off track. Well, as you've seen, I can fly, and once I get used to it again, I*

will be able to fly long distances. I can also make things healthy, beautiful, and flourishing. Would you like to see?"

Alora smiled in delight. "Would I ever!"

"I'll carry you down from here because it's a long way down, and you can't fly," Kal said as he bent down to pick her up and then took to the air gently. Alora was overwhelmed with the fantastic feeling of flying above everything, a sensation and view she had never imagined possible.

"How wonderful it is to fly with the birds, and it's much better than walking. Kal, if I were to make a saddle, would you be able to let me always fly with you?"

"I don't see why not, it should be much easier than carrying you," Kal replied.

Alora smiled. "When we get some leather, I will make a fine saddle."

Kal landed in a large field full of flowers and put Alora down. He said, *"You asked me what I can do; now I can show you."* He reached down and touched a red flower. When he touched the flower, his hand started glowing a faint red color, and all of a sudden, all the red flowers in the field became bright red and very healthy. He reached down with his other hand and touched a yellow flower, and his hand glowed a light yellow color. All the yellow flowers began to flourish with vibrancy.

"Wow! I've never seen anything like that!" Overwhelmed, Alora burst into tears due to the miracle she had just witnessed. She was about to walk towards Kal to hug him for what she had just seen when she heard voices yelling. Looking around, she noticed some men who were nearby and had also witnessed Kal's performance.

"That's where the strange magic came from. It looks like a dragon!" yelled one man. His words got the other five men with him all riled up. With their rusty farm tools in hand, they started

walking towards Alora and Kal, yelling words that put fright into both.

"I think we had better depart from this place before others arrive," Kal exclaimed. *"Where do you live, Alora?"*

"Look! Like the old stories, the dragon is flying away with the girl. We must find someone to rescue her before it's too late." While the men returned to their village to tell their tale, Kal flew off in the opposite direction with Alora.

Alora thought about the situation they would face with people. "I know the perfect place where we can go. It's large and pretty much abandoned," she said.

"What do you mean 'pretty much abandoned'?" Kal asked. Alora continued while fiddling with a red flower. "Well, there are these stories of evil creatures living there, but I never really believed in monsters or dragons, for that matter, but here you are," she said.

"Well, before we go there, we need to eat. After all, those fish earlier were the only thing I've had for 700 years," Kal said as his stomach began to rumble and roar in hunger.

"I have an idea, Kal!" Alora exclaimed. "You can hide in the woods by my house and get a cow, not the bull, just a cow. While you do that, I can check in with my mother and get some food for myself. I will also grab my leather tools, and I can make a saddle from the cow you pick to eat."

Alora guided the way to her home and enjoyed the view as Kal cradled her in his comforting arms as they flew. She was exhausted but exhilarated by the day's journey and beyond belief that she was flying with a dragon while heading home for dinner! As they approached the house, Kal said, *"Might as well go to bed because it is getting late, and we've both had a hectic day."*

"You're right, but I doubt I'll get much sleep after all this excitement today," Alora replied.

Alora went to bed exhausted, not even stopping for dinner, and still wearing all her clothes from the day before. She was so tired that she didn't even move the covers on her bed before crashing for the night. She woke from a restless sleep, feeling disheveled and groggy. Despite her tiredness, she knew she had to get moving to ensure Kal had everything he needed and to make a saddle for him to carry her. She quickly grabbed a bite to eat and set off to the woods, her mother's curious gaze following her out the door.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" her mother asked. "And why do you have your leather tools?"

"No time to explain, Mother; I'll see you later after I return from town."

Alora entered the woods, and her heart softened when she saw Kal sleeping. He was such a unique being! All around him, the trees, grass, and plants seemed brighter and more lush than usual, and no dead or wilted flora could be seen around him. It was gorgeous and surreal. She turned in a circle to take it all in, and when her circle was complete, she noticed Kal was awake and gazing at her.

"Good morning, Alora," Kal greeted her with a smile. "I couldn't sleep well last night, so I walked and explored the area."

"You were just sleeping a moment ago. Did I awaken you?" asked Alora.

"No, you did not wake me," Kal explained. "Well, maybe your presence did as I was suddenly dreaming about you, and here you are! Perhaps it's the result of being asleep in that egg so long that I can't seem to sleep for long now."

Alora sat down near him and patted his cheek. "Did you do all of this?" she asked, looking around and waving her arms around her. "It's so beautiful."

"Yes, I did this," he gestured to all the lush surroundings with his snout. "But it happened while I was sleeping. I must have

unconsciously used my powers to flourish the surrounding greenery."

Alora, still surprised by Kal's revelation, asked, "You spoke out loud just now! I didn't hear that in my head this time."

Kal nodded, chuckling, "Yes, I've been working on my speech during the night since I couldn't sleep for very long. I can still communicate telepathically with you, even over long distances, and that may come in handy when I can't talk to you in person." He gently scratched his ear with a large back claw, "So where are we headed now, Alora?"

Pulling out her compass, Alora leaned over so Kal could look at it, too. "Northwest from here to that place I was telling you about. We must approach it from the east through the mountains so others won't see where we're going. I've never been there because it's so far away, and the only way to get there is over the mountains. I'm not sure why anyone would build a place there, but I hope the stories about it being real are true and not just a way for that old man in town to sell me these maps."

Alora's brow creased as her thoughts drifted back to the day she had encountered the old man in Whitton. She paused to gather her thoughts, then began to tell the tale to Kal. "I remember him vividly, for his presence was shrouded in strangeness. What stood out most was when he had extended his hand to give me a map; his skin had seemed unusually rough, almost resembling scales more than the wrinkles of age.

It was a gloomy, cold, and misty day when I ventured into Whitton, a mere mile from my family's farmhouse. My intention was simple: to sell some grain from my mother's farm. I had not anticipated any deviations from this plan. Yet, shortly after entering the town, a cloaked old man approached me, claiming to have heard of my adventurous spirit and love for exploration.

Intrigued and slightly unnerved that the old man knew of me, I listened as he spun a tale of a castle hidden in the mountains. He described it in such detail that it felt like he had walked its halls himself. More intriguing was his offer of a map, a guide to this mysterious place. My excitement was hard to contain, yet I managed not to show it, not wanting to give the old man any reason to inflate the price of the map.

The price he asked for was peculiarly exact, mirroring the amount I had earned from selling the grain. I found it odd, yet the pull of adventure overrode my suspicions. I paid the price without hesitation, fearing I might miss the opportunity of a lifetime. After all, the old man had woven such an enthralling story."

She paused momentarily, recalling the man's words, "Intricacies lie within this map," she mimicked his whisper, her voice dropping to a soft murmur. "He said, 'It shares more than just pathways; it echoes the eyes of those who wander its trails.' His cryptic words hung in the air, an enigma wrapped in the guise of help."

"As I reached out to take the map, I caught a brief glimpse of the man's skin beneath the cloak - rough and textured, strikingly like scales before he hastily concealed it. This fleeting sight and his enigmatic words planted a seed of unease in me, though I couldn't quite place why. And all the while, it was like his eyes, hidden in the shadows, followed my every move with an intensity born of centuries of waiting."

Alora glanced at Kal as she finished her tale, seemingly unsure if he would believe her strange story.

"Okay, Northwest it is," Kal declared with a grin as he effortlessly lifted Alora into his strong arms. "Are you comfortable, Alora?"

"As comfortable as one can be without a saddle," Alora replied, her gaze shifting to the cowhide securely fastened to Kal's back. She

sighed with a hint of anticipation. "I can't wait for the day when we have a perfectly crafted saddle just for us, Kal."

As they soared through the skies, following Alora's map, they caught sight of the distant mountains. As they passed over the lush countryside, people below stopped their tasks and pointed upwards, their voices echoing their amazement. For the villagers, the sight of a dragon carrying a young girl away was something they had never seen before, and it unnerved them.

Alora turned her attention from the curious onlookers to Kal, her expression thoughtful. "I'm glad we chose to fly towards our destination and use the mountains as cover," she remarked, her voice tinged with concern. "Those people down there don't seem happy at all. They look frightened and angry."

Upon reaching the foothills of the mountains, Kal decided it was time for a brief rest. He carefully set Alora down and stretched his arms and wings.

"So, Kal," Alora began, curiosity gleaming in her eyes, "you mentioned yesterday that you were once a human boy before becoming a dragon. I've been pondering this because I found you as an egg. Can you share more of your incredible story?"