

Chasing Venom

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It was early in the morning and Autumn couldn't sleep. The red, always-anxious dragon moaned and stared at the ceiling. She got up and started to walk to Mother Lilac's hut. While she was strolling, she thought of her cruel chieftess, Venom, and their conference later today about her job in astronomy. The chieftess was a manipulative and cruel griffin. She had midnight-black eyes and if you stared at them for too long, you would grow cold.

Before long, she reached her mother's small hut. She was eating breakfast with a worried expression on her purple face. Lilac was a middle-aged dragon, dark purples and blues swirled across her.

"Honey," she said, "don't worry about your interview today, you're going to knock Venom dead, metaphorically speaking." She added quickly. You never knew where the Chieftess was, what she was thinking, her brilliant mind turning, thinking of a plot to kill you. "Now go," her mother said, Lilac's navy-blue eyes sweet and sympathetic.

Autumn was in the twists and turns of Venom's Palace. Normally the tallest structure in Ranaisha was beautiful, but with Venom, it was torturous to be in.

Two turns left, one turn right, and... here. She took a deep breath. *Venom's throne room.*

"I've been expecting you," a voice said, eerie and still, like a whisper in your nightmares. Venom's beak was hardly moving, but petrifying just the same.

The conference had not gone well. After ranting and calling Venom creepy and manipulative, Autumn had been banished. Now eighteen years later, in the fierce jungles of Poison Island, she planned a revenge.

A few short months later, Autumn had snuck to Ranaisha and crept into the chieftess' palace.

"Autumn," Venom's voice said, although she was nowhere to be seen. "Looking for your mother?" she didn't wait for an answer. "She died. Five years ago. *I* killed her."

That was all that it took. She Autumn couldn't stand the treacherous horror of Venom anymore. Autumn took a deep breath and said:

"Chieftess Venom, I challenge you for the throne of Ranaisha..."

"What?!" Venom screamed, her emotionless mask cracking as she jumped down from her throne and said, "You *dare* challenge me?!"

Autumn could see that this was not the best idea now. She looked down and saw her red talons with venomous claws shaking in the moonlight.

Venom stepped toward Autumn, her obsidian eyes gleaming and a malicious smile cracked across her beak. "I was thinking, looking inside and seeing how

weak you are. I accept your challenge, tomorrow in the Battle Coliseum near Doom's Pool in Death Island. Be there..."

The sun had weakened Autumn's eyes as she woke. She turned and spread her wings to Doom's Pool in Death Island. She found herself in the view of all the popularity of Ranaisha. She felt the blood-stained grass underneath her talons and trembled.

Suddenly, she was there. Venom's fiery dragon wings caught the sunlight. Then she spoke, "Ranaisha, we have a challenger for the throne. As the griffin I am, I accepted," then Venom added bitterly, "Let's see how this ends. Autumn, at the sound of the gong we will fight. Whoever dies, loses. The killer wins," Autumn guessed it was her imagination, but she thought she saw Venom's eyes roll.

Abruptly, she heard the gong. Autumn took her stance, baring her teeth, her own venomous tail arched toward Venom...

Hours, or what *felt* like hours, Autumn finally had her claws dug into Venom's shoulders. Black starbursts were already growing throughout her. Her eyes were bloodshot and Venom was already straining for breath.

"This is it, Venom. Your reign of terror is over," Autumn said through gritted teeth.

Wow, that sounded good, so scary! Then Autumn swiftly stabbed her tail through Venom's heart. The heart on her tail! Venom said her last words,

"Autumn, I'll come back, haunt you and hurt you until you and all of Ranaisha bow down before me, and I know just how to do it," With one final turn, Venom glared at a griffin cub, she was black and blue and silver. The griffin cub nodded, but Autumn could tell she didn't mean it. "Python, or should I say Panther, ugh, you are Ranaisha's last hope."

Then, Venom collapsed beneath Autumn's talons, dead.

There was a ceremony. A beautiful ceremony where Autumn was crowned chieftess.

Ranaisha, here I come. Autumn thought and sat down on the suddenly ruby and amber studded throne.

That was when new darkness and evil consumed her and a future was born. A future that Panther, Elm, and Victory were destined to end...

Ranaisha, in my life or death you'll crumble beneath me...