

The Girl and the Tiny Dragon



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Maya was small for her age, but her curiosity was huge. One sunny morning, she skipped through her grandmother's garden in her yellow rain boots. She wore blue overalls over a striped shirt, and her canvas satchel bounced at her side. Her curly black hair, tied with a red ribbon, bobbed as she searched for hidden treasures among the flowers.



Grandmother Sole sat on the porch, her silver braid shining in the sun. She wore her moss-green shawl and smiled as Maya explored. 'Look closely, little one,' she said. 'Magic hides in the smallest places.' Maya grinned, her gap-toothed smile wide, and hurried toward a row of flowerpots near the old stone wall.



One flowerpot wobbled. Maya peeked inside and gasped. A tiny dragon, no bigger than her palm, blinked up at her with huge amber eyes. His emerald scales shimmered, and his golden belly glowed. He had small folded wings and tiny horn nubs. 'Oh!' Maya whispered. 'You're a dragon!' The little creature tilted his head and let out a soft chirp.



Maya gently lifted the tiny dragon out of the flowerpot. He curled his tail around her finger and nuzzled her hand. 'I'll call you Pip,' she said. Pip's amber eyes sparkled. Maya made him a little collar from woven grass and tied it around his neck. He looked very proud. From that moment, they were best friends.



Maya kept Pip safe in a shoebox lined with soft moss. She fed him tiny bits of fruit and told him stories. Pip loved to hide in her satchel and ride on her shoulder. But sometimes he looked out the window with a strange, faraway look in his amber eyes. Maya wondered what he was thinking.



One day, Pip's scales lost their shine. He didn't want to play. Maya held him close and felt worried. 'What's wrong, little friend?' she asked. Pip just sighed and curled his tail. Grandmother Sole watched from her chair, her round glasses glinting. 'Bring him here, Maya,' she said gently.



Grandmother Sole held Pip in her wrinkled hands. 'A dragon needs more than a shoebox,' she said. 'He needs a magical habitat, a special place where his kind can grow and be free.' Maya's hazel eyes grew wide. 'Where is it?' she asked. Grandmother Sole smiled. 'Beyond the old oak tree, past the babbling brook. But the way is hidden.'



Maya packed her satchel with fruit, a bottle of water, and a map Grandmother Sole drew on a leaf. She put Pip in her pocket, and he poked his head out, curious. 'We'll find your home,' she promised. Grandmother Sole gave her a hug. 'Remember, true friendship means doing what is best for the other, even when it is hard.'



Maya set off in her yellow rain boots. She passed the old oak tree and crossed the babbling brook on stepping stones. Pip chirped directions, his tiny horn nubs twitching. The path twisted through tall grass and under low branches. Maya's heart beat fast, but she kept going. She had to find the magical habitat.



Soon they reached a misty forest where the trees glowed with soft light. Maya felt a tingle in her fingers. 'This must be the place,' she whispered. Pip's amber eyes grew wide. He leapt from her pocket and fluttered his small wings. But then the mist thickened, and Maya couldn't see the path. She felt a little scared.



Suddenly, a tall, slender figure stepped out of the mist. The Keeper had pale blue-grey skin and long white hair that drifted like fog. Luminous silver eyes looked down kindly, and faint glowing markings shimmered on their cheeks. Their violet robe, patterned with silver leaves, rustled softly. 'You have brought a little one home,' the Keeper said.



Maya held Pip close. 'Is this the magical habitat?' she asked. The Keeper nodded. 'It is a place where dragons can grow and be free.' Maya's heart felt heavy. She didn't want to say goodbye. But she remembered Grandmother Sole's words. 'I want Pip to be happy,' she said, her voice trembling. 'Even if it's hard.'



Pip looked at Maya with his big amber eyes. He chirped softly and nuzzled her cheek. Then he turned to the Keeper and fluttered his wings. The Keeper smiled. 'You are welcome here, little dragon.' Maya took a deep breath and gently set Pip down. 'I'll never forget you,' she whispered. Pip wore the grass collar she had made, and it glowed in the misty light.



The Keeper led Pip into the magical habitat, where glowing flowers and sparkling streams awaited. Pip looked back and chirped one last time. Maya waved, tears in her eyes but a smile on her face. She knew she had done the right thing. True friendship meant giving your friend what they truly need.



Maya walked back home through the misty forest, feeling both sad and proud. When she reached Grandmother Sole's garden, the sun was setting. Grandmother Sole wrapped her in a warm hug. 'You did well, little one,' she said. 'Pip will always remember your kindness.' Maya smiled, her gap-toothed grin returning.



That night, Maya looked out her window at the stars. She thought of Pip, growing strong in his magical home. She knew she would always carry him in her heart. Friendship, she learned, came with responsibility, and doing what is best for a friend is the greatest gift of all. And somewhere far away, Pip chirped happily, safe and free.