

TONIGHT'S STORY

For the nights when sharing felt hard today

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*Maya and the Dragon
Named Gregory*

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A bedtime story for Maya, age 5

Maya was five years old, and she had drawn the most beautiful dragon in the world.

The dragon was purple and green, and he had thirty-seven teeth. Maya had counted. She had used every single one of her good markers. She had even used the gold one, which she usually saved for emergencies.

When her little brother saw the dragon, he reached for it.

“Mine!” Maya said, very fast. She snatched the paper and held it close to her chest. “I drew it.”

Her little brother’s face crumpled. He toddled away.

Maya felt a small twist in her stomach. But the dragon was hers.

That night, when Maya climbed into bed, her dog Biscuit jumped up beside her and put his head on her foot. Maya closed her eyes.

In her dream, Maya was sitting on a little hill, and the dragon she had drawn was sitting next to her. He was real now — full-sized, with thirty-seven teeth and a tail like a long curly ribbon.

“Hello, Maya,” said the dragon. “I’m Gregory.”

“Hi, Gregory,” said Maya.

“I have a problem,” said Gregory.

“What is it?” asked Maya.

Gregory looked very sad. “I have all this fire inside me,” he said, “and I don’t know what to do with it.”

“Can you breathe it out?” Maya asked.

“I can,” said Gregory, “but if I just breathe it out by myself, it doesn’t really do anything. It just goes up into the sky and disappears.”

“Hmm,” said Maya.

“But,” said Gregory, “if I breathe it onto a marshmallow, it becomes a toasted marshmallow. And if I breathe it onto a cold person, it makes them warm.



And if I breathe it onto a sad campfire, the campfire grows tall, and people gather around, and they tell stories, and the night gets better.”

“Oh,” said Maya.

“The fire only counts,” said Gregory, “if it’s for someone else.”

Maya thought about her drawing.

“Gregory,” she said, “is that what drawings are like too?”

Gregory tilted his huge head. “What do you mean?”

“My drawing is just paper,” Maya said slowly, “if it’s only mine.”

Gregory smiled, which is a frightening thing for a dragon to do, but Maya was used to him by now.

“What would happen,” he asked, “if you let your brother see it?”

“He’d smile,” Maya said.



“And then?”

“He’d want to draw too.”

“And then?”

Maya laughed. “He’d make a worse one. He’s very small.”

“And then?”

Maya thought about it. “I’d help him. And then we’d have two dragons.”

Greggory nodded a slow, wise nod. “That’s how dragons multiply,” he said.

When the dream ended, Greggory waved his curly tail goodbye.

In the morning, Maya climbed out of bed. Biscuit followed her into the kitchen, where her little brother was sitting in his high chair with mashed banana on his chin.

Maya took the dragon drawing off the fridge. She set it down in front of him.



“You can hold it,” she said.

Her brother held it very carefully, with his small banana-y hands.

Then Maya got out a fresh piece of paper, and the markers, and she said, “Now I’ll draw you one too.”

Her brother smiled so hard his eyes squeezed shut.

Maya felt a different kind of feeling in her stomach this time. It wasn’t a twist. It was more like a campfire growing tall.



A question for after the story



*What's something Maya found out tonight that she
didn't know before?*

(no right answer — just a soft thing to wonder about together)

