

Fire in the Sky

It was just an ordinary day. I never would have expected that to happen. I was walking down the street when I saw something small and red coming down from the sky. "What is that?" I wondered.

The thing landed on the sidewalk. It was a baby dragon! "Hello," I said, because I have a way with words. The dragon had a cloud of steam coming from his eyes. He was crying! "Hey, what's wrong?" I asked.

"I lost my momma."

"Okay, I want to help you, but you need to calm down. I think you're, uh, melting my sneakers." I could feel some warmth in my shoes near the dragon's head, and, sure enough, when I looked down, the sole of my sneaker was turning to liquid and stuck to the sidewalk.

"I'm sorry," he sniffled, then paused. "My name is Malcolm."

"Okay, Malcolm. Where was the last place you saw your momma?" I asked, thinking of the questions you usually ask a lost child. He told me how they were migrating from their home in Brigalandia to another colony in West Asiatican. They were traveling in a large group, and Malcolm fell behind. Then, a wind current caught him and blew him off course. He had no idea where he was or which direction he should go.

I tried asking him to describe Brigalandia, but all he could tell me was that there were tall trees, and flowing rivers, and fluffy clouds. He couldn't remember any distinctive landmarks, other than the pink cave he lived in. I had never seen any pink caves in my neighborhood, nor any caves, for that matter. I had no idea what to do, so I used the Principle of Using Hospitality to Make Friends, which I had learned from my Grandma Cole: I invited Malcolm to my house for a snack.

I soon realized that I couldn't just walk all over town with a baby dragon. People would stare, and our town had a strict policy requiring pet owners to have permits and use a leash, neither of which I had. After asking his permission, I placed Malcolm in my backpack, leaving it unzipped just a little so he could breathe and see. It was a good thing we didn't run into anyone in the two blocks between where I had found Malcolm and my house, because I knew I looked ridiculously suspicious. I was awful at keeping a straight face in a tense situation, not to mention the oddly-shaped bulge in my backpack.

Finally, we arrived at 12 Apple Tree Avenue, the white one-story house I called home. My mom would be home at 5:15. It was almost three o'clock. This gave me two hours to figure out what to do with Malcolm. Once we were safely in the house, I let him out, and he coughed.

“Your strange carrying vessel reminds me of my home, dark and warm...but it doesn't smell right,” he told me. “Our cave has a smoky, musky smell, but your carrying vessel smells like...ham and daisies, I think.”

I just laughed as he went on and on, telling me everything about the cave where he used to live with his parents. When he stopped talking after what seemed like twenty minutes, I asked what he wanted for a snack.

“Do you have any smoked chipmunk?’ he asked. I just stared at him. “That's silly,” he said to himself. “You can't smoke chipmunk because you don't breathe fire. Well, if you give me some, I can smoke it for myself.”

“Uh, we don't have any chipmunk. That's not really something we eat.”

“Oh... Well, what do you have?” Malcolm asked, looking a little disappointed.

I went through the fridge and cupboard, showing him chips, pretzels, granola bars, an assortment of yogurt, berries, pudding, and some deli meats. He chose a slice of ham and a bowl of blackberries and raspberries, because that was most similar to the food he normally ate. He explained to me that he was omnivorous, and had a diet similar to that of a black bear.

Now that Malcolm was well-fed, he was tired. So was I, and since I still had no idea how to get him home, I decided it wouldn't hurt if we both took a quick

nap. I found a fuzzy blanket and curled up on the couch, and Malcolm, due to his tininess, laid down on the rocking chair. We both fell asleep quickly.

A seemingly short time later, I woke up with a start. I immediately glanced at the clock. It was 5:11! My mom would be home in four minutes.

I grabbed Malcolm and ran upstairs to my room, where I set him gently on the bed.

"Hey, what's going on?" he exclaimed.

I explained that my mom would be home really soon, and she couldn't know that I brought a dragon home for a visit. I tried to play it off that she was worrying about work a lot right now, and that was the problem, as opposed to the actual issue that dragons weren't supposed to be real. I promised that I would come back as soon as I could, and bring him some dinner. I also assured him that I would find a way to get him back to his momma by tomorrow afternoon.

I rushed downstairs to meet my mom, who was just pulling in the driveway, and tried to look casual. I had never kept a secret from Mom in my life, and my inability to keep a straight face wasn't helping. She immediately sensed something was fishy.

"Honey, what's wrong?" she asked as she set her purse on the table.

"Nothing," I replied, as if she would ever believe that.

“Did you get in trouble?”

“No.”

“Are you sick?”

“No. Don’t worry. I’m fine.”

“Please, just tell me what’s going on. I promise I won’t be mad.”

I would have to tell her something, but what? I couldn’t very well say that I had found a baby dragon, and he was currently sitting on my bed. She wouldn’t believe it if I did tell her. I needed some kind of alibi.

What will our narrator tell her mother? Will Malcolm find his momma?

What secrets lurk in this sleepy town? Find out in the next installment of *Fire in the Sky*.