

*The Golden*



*Dragon*

Once upon a time, in a faraway country between two blue rivers, lived a golden dragon called Marko. He liked people and was eager to help them. But everyone was terribly afraid of him. During the day he slept in the bowels of the earth below the old town and waited for nightfall. At night he went into town, walked and collected valuables and coins that clumsy people had lost. He was modest and did not need money. His old punctured pot became too small for all the treasure he had collected. He dreamt about whom he could help, whom to give money? Thrifty Marko needed advice and help. He remembered his friend Lady Dragon in Portugal and sent her a letter...

*Dear Laura,*

*I'm writing to you because I need your advice.*

*For a long time I have been collecting valuables that I've found in the street. I don't need them. Therefore I don't know what I should do with them. Maybe you have got some idea, who can I help? Maybe I should create treasure house and multiply money? I've heard that you know in Italy a very famous fairy who has got a magic well, which makes dreams come true. If so, maybe it could multiply valuables? And then, we could share them with poor people. I think you can help me. Can we meet soon or maybe you could send me a message? Maybe this could solve my problem.*

*Trusting in your good heart, I finish my letter now.*

*Your good friend.*

Marko waited one day..., two days..., a week..., a month..., he started to feel a little bit sad and angry with Laura. Until the Lady Dragon finally answered:



**Dear Marko**

I'm afraid that I can't solve your problem. The famous fairy cannot use her magic to multiply valuables, it's a kind of fairies's rule, she would lose her powers if she did so. Anyhow, it's an important decision that you should make. But I can give you an idea. Far away, there exist a wise Master Dragon who could help you because he knows an important secret about dragons. For sure that secret is decisive if you want to find a solution.

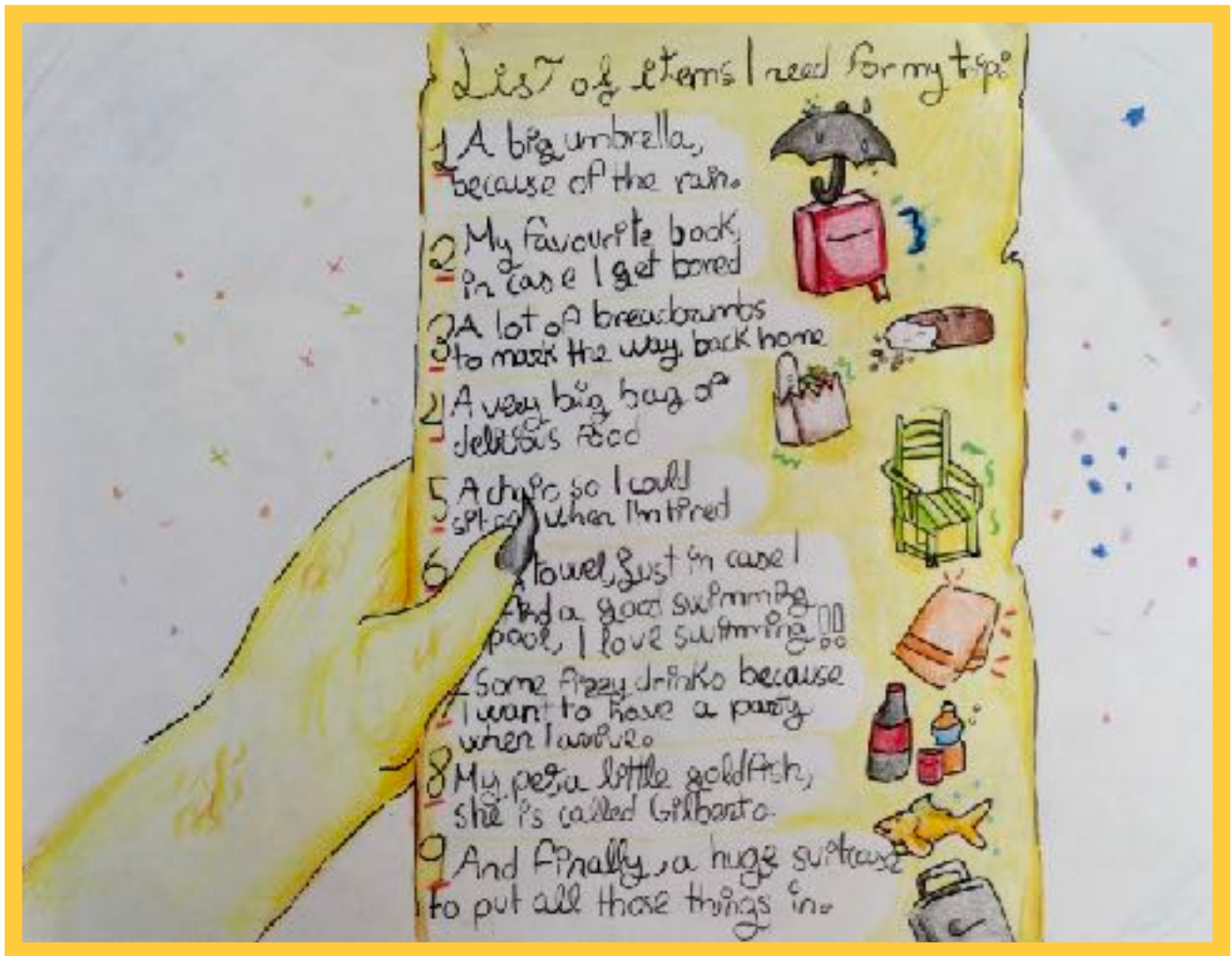
He lives in the mountains of Tanzania.

Good luck, my friend.

Hugs, Laura



Marko was so excited!!! He could start his trip tomorrow, but first, he should pack!



Next morning, Marko woke up very early to start his trip. He flew and flew for days over cities, seas, deserts, mountains and rivers. Exhausted as he was, finally arrived in Tanzania. But..., there were hundreds of mountains there! Oh no! He'll never find it! He was about to give up, until... "one second!" he thought "that smell.... sausages!!!" He flew for an hour following that delicious smell and ended in the highest mountain of the area, Mount Kilimanjaro. "Wait!" he told himself "What's that smell? It comes from that door in the mountain, it must be a hidden cave! But, Laura didn't say anything about a cave, anyway, let's go!"

He knocked the door with his big nails and someone inside the cave asked: -  
"Who's there?"

- I'm Marko, the golden dragon. Are you the wise Master Dragon I'm looking for? Please, I need your help, it's very important.
- I will open the door only if you guess the name of my hamster Barry. His name is the clue to cross the door.

Marko felt so sad: "- it's impossible, I'll never guess the name of that stupid hamster!". He stopped for a second trying to think. Suddenly, he heard something inside his bag: "Marko, it's me, Gilberta, the name of his hamster is Barry!!!".



- "Barry!!!", said Marko, and the door started to open slowly. - "Yoo-Hoo!!! This Gilberta has always been sooo intuitive!!"

Marko walked into the cave. The inside was full of bones, dark and creepy. Marko felt scared, - "Master Dragon must be a horrible dragon! I'll have nightmares!!!" He thought. But the Master Dragon didn't look so horrible. He was a very big dragon with bright purple scales. He was wearing big black glasses which made him look even wiser.



- "What do you want Marko?" asked the Master Dragon

Marko explained to the Master Dragon that he would like to multiply his valuables to help poor people.

" - People? Humans? Yuck!!!" said Master Dragon with a look of disgust. He said lots of things about humans and their disgusting habits. Once he



finished, finally said: “- Ok, ok, I’ll help you. Here you are, this is a map, it will show you the way to find a special gem. This gem has the power to transform you into a real Golden Dragon, that means that everything you touch, it would turn into gold. That way, you will be able to help poor people.”

Marko didn’t trust Master Dragon very much but he was also excited so he said ‘thanks’, took the map and flew away.

Marko followed the map’s instructions and he arrived to a strange pink lake. He saw his reflection in the pink water. He looked prettier than ever, his scales sparkled and his eyes were of a beautiful violet.



- “If you want to look so handsome, just get into the water!” Said a strange voice.

Marko thought that if he looked prettier, maybe humans wouldn't be scared of him, and he could help and not frighten them. So he got into the water. But... suddenly the water became green and dirty, it was impossible to swim and he started to sink.

- "Your arrogance brought you here and you will stay forever, forever!!!" said again the voice.

Marko was so scared but he remembered something and he screamed:

- "I like the way I am, I don't want to change, I'm already handsome!!!" And after saying that, he got unconscious.

When he woke up, he was lying on grass, next to the lake, but it was not pink anymore. A young girl and an old man were standing next to him.

- "Who are you? Are you a dragon?" asked the girl

- "No, I'm a butterfly! What do you think? Of course I'm a dragon!" answered Marko angrily.

- "Look grandpa!!! He can talk!!!"

- "Yes he can, I'm glad he is safe and he looks a good person, I mean... a good dragon" said the old man smiling. "We were fishing when suddenly you came out of the lake. Tell us little dragon, what are you doing here? Do you need our help?"

It will continue...





“I am looking for a gem, which can multiply my wealth.” said Marco.

“You dragons, all you can talk about is gold.” replied the girl.

“But I want to help YOU!” Marco objected.

“How can you help us?” asked the old Man.

“When I get enough wealth, I will give it to you, humans.” claimed Marco.

“Well, we will trust you then. My great-grandfather used to tell me old legends and I liked to listen. In one of them, there was a dragon who owned a precious gem with that power. He even tried to help people, but his good intentions went hand-in-hand with bad luck and disasters. So people chased him away. The dragon was angry and disappointed. So he flew away, to live bitterly alone. Nobody saw him ever again. It is said that he has despised people ever since.”

Marco thought for a moment and then he remembered the Master Dragon's words. He recalled his story about humans and their disgusting habits and their dark nature.

"It must be him." he thought and went back to him.

Marco flew to Master Dragon and almost destroyed his door. Master Dragon opened the door, because he was expecting him.

"You gave me the blind map!!! I know you have the gem and you're hiding it!!"



Master dragon thought to himself: Well well, so he did not drown after all. Let's see what he does when he finds out that people are corrupt and heartless.

"Marco, let me tell you something. Long time before, I was a young dragon with my naive notion that all people were good. I grew up in the mountains as a baby. When my father died, I sat in a cave for days. I got really bored, so I went out to explore. I reached a small village and, as a naive young dragon, I offered to help the villagers. People are so

lazy, so they accepted my offer immediately. I got my first assignment from an owner of a mill. He needed more water in the millrun. I saw that his millrun was not getting enough water from a stream, beside which a river flows. So I changed the direction of the river into the millrun. But there was too much water and it rolled out and flooded the mill. The miller was terribly mad at me. I



felt so guilty at that time! At about that moment, Jack found me. He was my only friend. He gave me confidence and I began to help with pleasure. Unfortunately, I accidentally made everything worse. Jack had always stood by my side and I believed him so much that I gave him one of my scales. You know, Marco, how scales are important to us. They are like our armour, we are invincible with them. The human creature that gets such a scale has an incredibly long life. And who wouldn't want to live forever?

Those days I didn't know how stingy and treacherous people can be. Local councillor was looking for an opportunity to get me.

One winter day I carried fire wood, to heer the human worms from freezing to death. I had no way to chop the tree so I pulled it out of the soil. Unfortunately, it was too heavy so I couldn't fly and I had to go on foot. My foot slipped and I fell down and slid. As the tree was flying through the air it hit a watchtower, which fell on a few surrounding houses. That was the last straw.





They drove me out of town and when I left, Jack didn't even show up, he didn't come to say goodbye and he didn't even call my name. He just wanted that precious scale. I was furious and wanted to go back for my scale. That's when they started shooting arrows at me. One of these pieces of wood found its target in my eye. That's why I wear these horrible glasses. I went to this cave, and I've lived here ever since.

Master Dragon opened a drawer and took out a beautiful red gem. The gem looked like a dragon with big horns, wings, glasses and a beard. "It looks very weird," commented Marco. Then he understood. The gem looked exactly like Master Dragon.

"This gem looks like you," Marco said.

"Yes, it does" Master Dragon replied. "This gem transform into who owns the gem. But, are you still sure you want help people?"

Master Dragon stretched out his open hand holding the gem to Marco ...