

The Dragon and the Hedgehog



Jane MEADOW

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Deep in the heart of the forest, where the trees grew tall and the moss grew soft, lived a very large dragon. His scales were the color of moss, and his belly was pale yellow. He had big, round amber eyes and small, rounded horns. His feet were broad and heavy, with blunt claws that thumped on the ground. He was kind, but he never looked where he stepped.



The dragon loved to wander through the forest. He would hum a happy tune and swish his short wings. But his big feet crashed through bushes and flattened flowers. "Oops!" he would say when he heard a crack. "Sorry, little plants!" But he never slowed down. He didn't notice the tiny creatures scurrying out of his way.



One sunny morning, the dragon was walking near a berry patch. He didn't see a tiny hedgehog right in his path. The hedgehog was small enough to fit in the dragon's footprint. His round body was covered in brown spines with cream tips. He had a soft tan face and bright, dark eyes. He looked up and saw the huge foot coming down.



Most little animals would have run away. But this hedgehog was brave. He stood still and called out, "Hey, big friend! Watch your step!" The dragon stopped just in time. His heavy foot hovered right above the hedgehog. "Oh my!" said the dragon. "I almost stepped on you! I'm so sorry. I didn't see you down there."



The hedgehog smiled. "That's okay. You're very big, and I'm very small. But maybe you could look down more often?" The dragon lowered his big head. His amber eyes blinked. "I try," he said. "But the world up here is so interesting. I forget to watch the ground." The hedgehog nodded. "I can help you with that!"



"You would help me?" asked the dragon. "Of course!" said the hedgehog. "But first, can we be friends?" The dragon's wide snout curved into a smile. "I would like that very much. I'm the only dragon here, and I get lonely." The hedgehog chuckled. "And I'm the only hedgehog who wants to be friends with a dragon. So we're perfect!"



The hedgehog climbed onto a mushroom to be closer to the dragon's face. "Now, watch me," he said. "First, take a slow step. Lift your foot high and look before you put it down." The dragon tried. He lifted one heavy foot and looked carefully. "Like this?" he asked. "Yes!" said the hedgehog. "And then look around for little creatures."



The dragon practiced. He took one slow step, then another. He looked down at the ground. He saw ants marching, beetles crawling, and a tiny mouse hiding under a leaf. "I see them!" he said. "I never saw them before!" The hedgehog cheered. "Great job! Now you're being careful." The dragon felt proud of his new skill.



Soon the other small animals noticed. They peeked out from behind bushes and rocks. A squirrel chattered, "Is it safe?" The hedgehog waved. "Come out! The dragon is careful now!" One by one, the animals came closer. The dragon stood very still. "Hello, little friends," he said softly. "I won't hurt you."



The rabbit hopped forward. The fox crept near. The mouse scurried out. They all looked at the dragon's big feet, but the feet stayed still. "Can you really walk without squishing us?" asked the rabbit. The dragon nodded. "My friend the hedgehog taught me. I walk slowly and watch the ground." The animals smiled. "Then let's play!"



The dragon became the best playmate. He let the squirrels climb on his tail. He let the birds sit on his horns. He let the hedgehog ride on his snout. They played hide-and-seek, and the dragon hid behind trees—though his tail always stuck out! The small creatures laughed, and the dragon laughed too. His big amber eyes sparkled with joy.



But one day, the dragon forgot. He saw a butterfly and chased it, thumping quickly through the ferns. "Wait!" cried the hedgehog. "Remember to be careful!" The dragon stopped at once. He looked down and saw a family of mice right in front of his foot. "Oh! Thank you, little friend," he said. "I almost forgot."



The dragon took a deep breath. He slowed down and looked at the ground again. "I'm sorry, little mice," he said. "I will be more careful." The mice squeaked happily and ran to safety. The hedgehog patted the dragon's toe. "It's okay. Everyone forgets sometimes. What matters is that you try again." The dragon smiled. "You always help me remember."



From that day on, the dragon and the hedgehog were best friends. They walked together every day. The dragon stepped slowly, watching for tiny creatures. The hedgehog rode on his snout and called out, "All clear!" The other animals trusted the dragon completely. They knew he would always be careful now.



The forest became a happier place. The dragon played with all the small creatures, and no one was afraid. The hedgehog taught the dragon that kindness means thinking about others. And the dragon taught the hedgehog that even the biggest friend can learn something new. They were an unlikely pair, but they fit together perfectly.



And so, in the green forest, a big dragon and a tiny hedgehog showed everyone that gentle friendship can change how we act. The dragon learned to walk slowly and watch the ground. The hedgehog learned that courage can make a friend. And all the animals learned that kindness makes the world a better place for everyone.