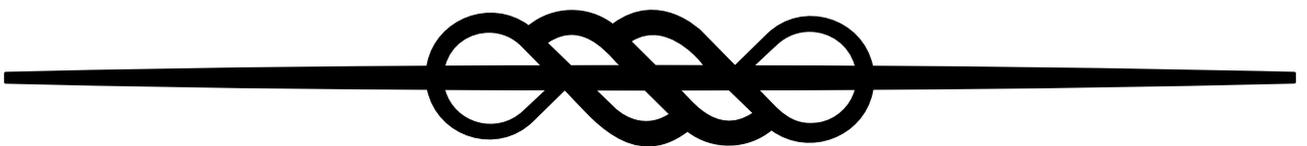


The Golden



Dragon



Chapter one

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.

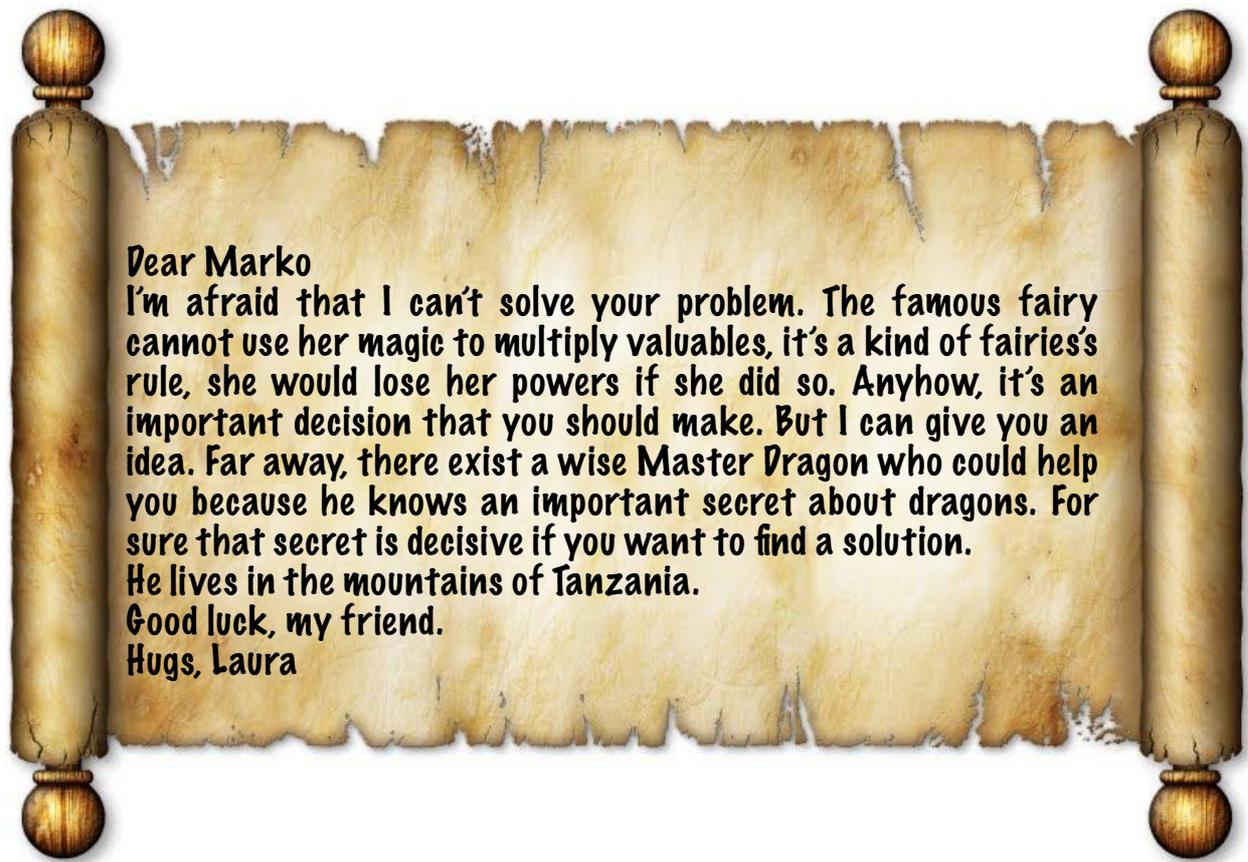
For a long time I have been collecting valuables that I've found in the street. I don't need them. Therefore I don't know what I should do with them. Maybe you have got some idea, who can I help? Maybe I should create treasure house and multiply money? I've heard that you know in Italy a very famous 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

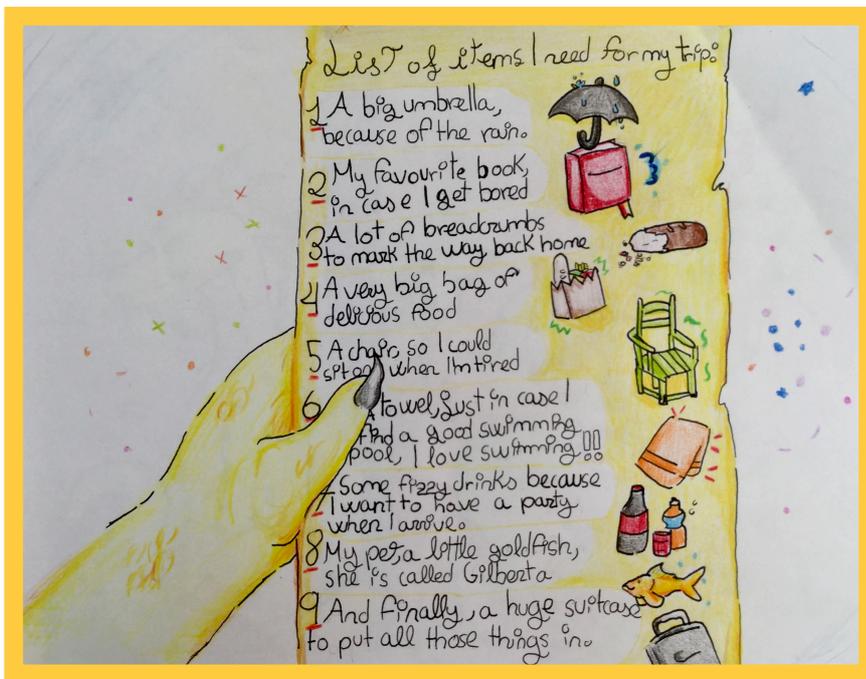
Marko waited one day..., two days..., a week..., a month..., he started to feel a little bit sad and angry with Laura. Until the Lady Dragon finally answered:



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...

Chapter two

“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 naïve 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 naïve 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 heel 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.

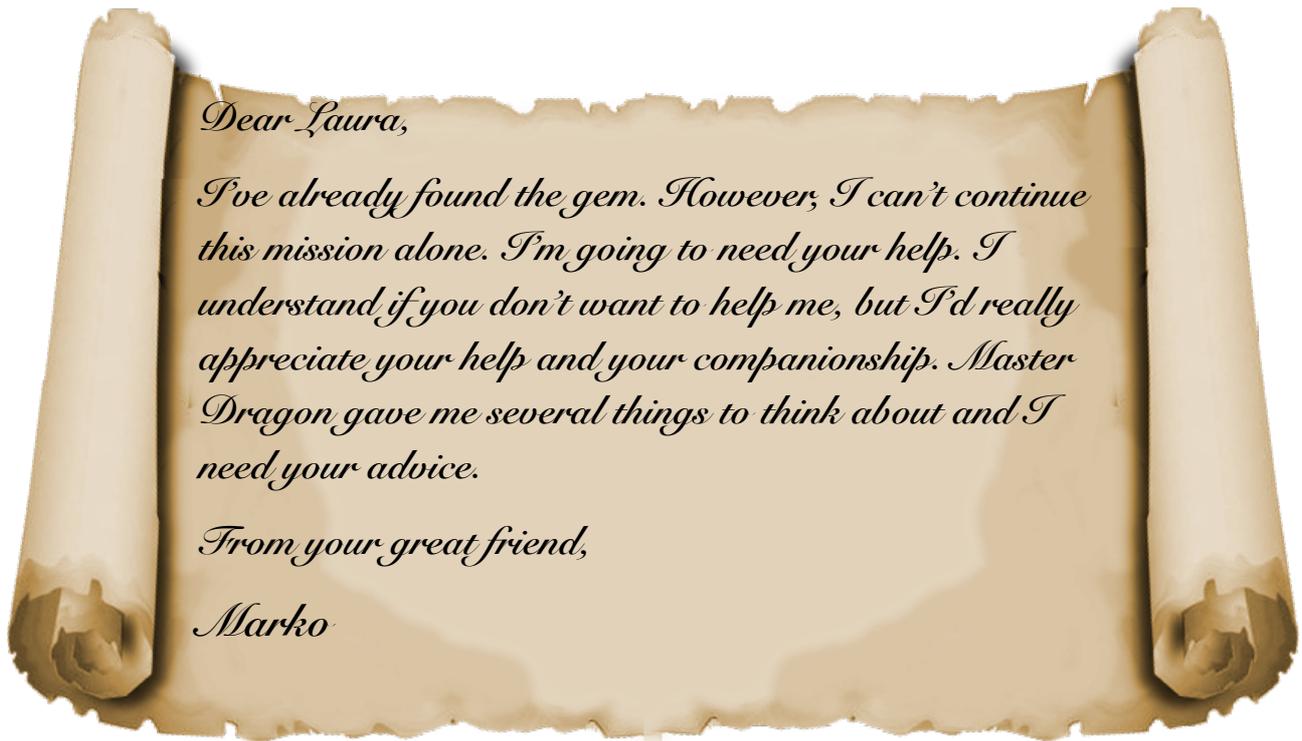
"Yes, it does" Master Dragon replied. "This gem transform into who owns the gem. But, are you still sure you want help people?"

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

Chapter three

... and Marko grabbed the gem.

Leaving the cave, Marko thought that he couldn't do this on his own and realised that he's going to need help from his friend Laura, he quickly flew home and wrote a letter to Laura.



Several days passed without an answer.... Marko started to believe that Laura would never reply. He needed a plan if he wanted to help the humans, so he started thinking about a way to fix this.

The days became weeks and the weeks became months and he still didn't have an answer from Laura and without what seemed to be a reaction from the precious gem that Master Dragon gave him, he started to get worried because nothing was happening. He feared that the gem wouldn't work.



He realised that the longer he would wait, the least probable would be Laura's reply and that the gem wouldn't transform into the new owner's face. Marko was afraid that he would never be able to help the humans.

Hopelessly, Marko looked at the sky as if to ask for help, when, unexpectedly, he saw an orange dot getting closer. Yes, it was Laura....

Laura had read his letter and was arriving, ready to help Marko. Full of joy, Marko couldn't help but to jump around like a child!

Laura and Marko talked for hours and tried to understand how the gem worked.

(Laura) – Should we say some magical words?

(Marko) – I don't think so.

(Laura) – Then what might it be?

(Marko) – I don't know, but we'll figure it out.

The days passed by and they were going crazy, how was a simple gem taking so much time of their lives. They needed a solution and fast...

(Laura) – Wait, the gem still has the Master Dragon's face.

(Marko) – Does that have anything to do with it?

(Laura) – Of course it has! Don't you think that by this time the gem should've had your face?

(Marko) – Well, that's a hypothesis.

(Laura) – Let's talk to the Master Dragon then!



They flew as fast they could and when they arrived at the Master Dragon's cave, they knocked on the door and the Master asked:

- Who's there?

(Marko) – Master, open the door, it's important!

(Master Dragon) – Marko, is that you? What are you doing here?

The door opened slowly, and Master Dragon invited them in.

(Master Dragon) – You shouldn't be here, and... First of all: Who are you, "Orange"?

The Master was pointing towards Laura...



(Laura) – I'm Laura and I came to help my friend, to convince you...

(Master Dragon) – ...Convince me to do what?

(Marko) – Helping the humans...

(Master Dragon) – Don't even think about that! I gave you the gem for a reason... Don't get me into your problems...

(Laura) – But the gem still has your face...

(Master Dragon) – That's not my problem!

(Laura) – Of course it is!

Laura screamed so high that even the ones that were passing outside heard it clearly... Marko and the Master made very surprised expressions, looking at Laura, who continued:

- Your selfishness is damaging my friend's mission!!! So, if you have got at least one bit of kindness in your heart, you are going to help him and...

- Laura! – screamed Marko – It's enough. If he doesn't want to help, then we're not going to force him.

(Master Dragon) – You have the courage to come to my house and scream at me, thinking that would make me help you? You are even worse than the humans...

(Laura) – Look, I'm sorry for screaming at you, but we just wanted your help...

(Marko) – I understand if you want to kick us out, but please reconsider. We are begging for help. We don't know what to do anymore...

(Master Dragon) – You kids are all the same... You think that a simple apology is going to make me change my mind?

(There's was pause)

(Master Dragon) – And how would you prove that the humans are worthy of my help?

To be continued...

Chapter four

Marko: "I know someone that can help us for sure. Please join us."

Master Dragon: "This better be right, otherwise I'll be very angry with you guys."

They flew together to where the old man and his daughter was fishing by the lake. They saw them still there, they waved. That moment Master Dragon had feeling that it could be him, "old friend". When they landed the little girl said to his father: "Is it him?" "Of course, it is him", said the old man.

Master Dragon got pissed and said: "Why did you not goodbye wave to me or anything? You weren't there for me. I was attacked by your people in anger."

Old man: "I understand how you felt. I'm sorry that I wasn't there for you or waved goodbye to you."

Old man took big sigh and continued: "On that day I was in my house watching my daughter getting born. She was so beautiful, then I heard that our people were attacking something, so I went outside quickly as possibly. When I understood what was happening, I just watched you flying away. It was sad for me too. But now we are here, shall we resume helping our people?"

Master dragon felt guilty for making negative words towards humans.

Master dragon: "Sure I'll help you and your people." Marko look at this gem and try to guess puzzle. It's very easy." Marko thought and kept thinking of how it might work but couldn't understand. Master dragon said with smile:



“Arrow.” Marko: “What do you mean arrow? There’s no arrow on this gem.”

Laura: “Oh I know this is where the arrow hit his eye, try pressing that.”

Marko: “Wow Laura you are very good at solving puzzles!”

Marko pressed the eye and started transforming to golden dragon. He felt proudly.

Rose: “Wow, grandpa your legends are so true. Marko can I get on your back and fly around a little bit?”

Marko: “Well, well, I would allow that but you would slide away. We need something that is like,” Marko looked around and saw a horse which has something on his back, “what does the horse have on his back?”

Rose: “Oh, it is a saddle. It wouldn’t fit for you because you are bigger than the horse. But don’t worry, first we will help our people to make sure that they are friendly to you guys then we can ask leather-smith to make a saddle for you.”

Marko agreed and asked Laura and Master dragon if they wanted to help people. Laura nodded quickly. Master Dragon: “I’m not sure if I can help or not. Perhaps I can do easy stuff but not hard stuff since I have bad visions and I’m old.”

Marko understood and said to Laura if she was ready. She was. They went to the town and talked to people who were terrified. “Don’t worry we will help you for sure, I promise,” said Marko and Laura. They collected what people wanted, chopped woods, helped building house, collected other stuff. Marko spitted golds and gave a few gold pieces to each citizen. People in that town

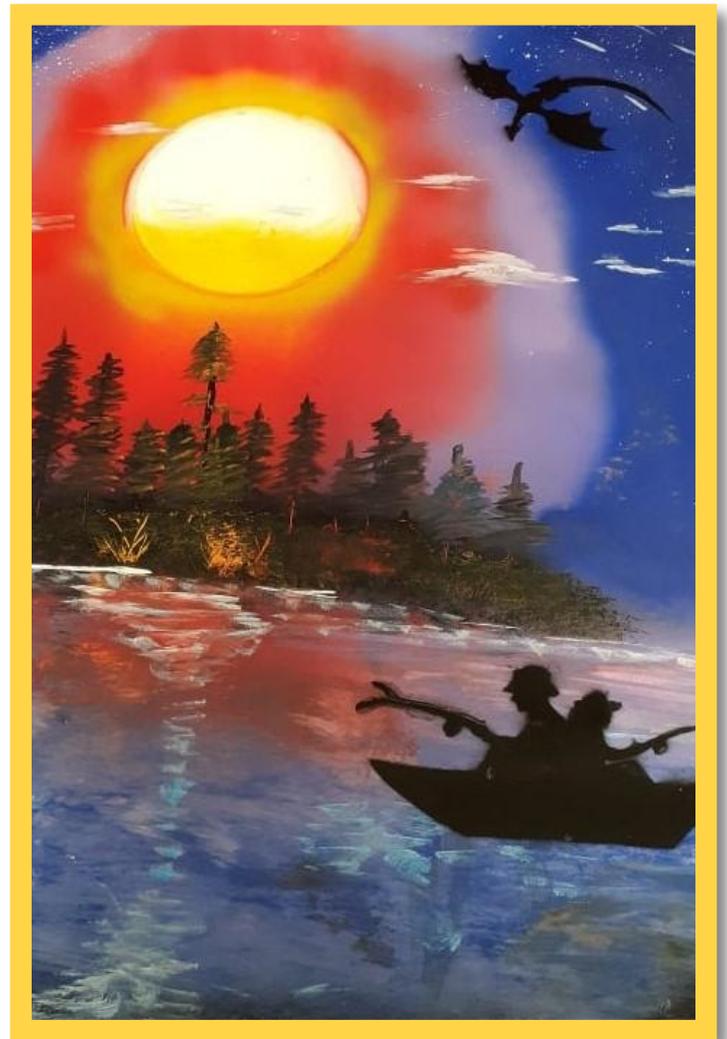


were so happy and began to be friendly to dragons. Meanwhile, Master Dragon and the old man were telling stories to each others. Rose came towards Marko and said, "follow me". They went together to the leather-smith and asked for one saddle for his back. A woman smiled and started to make it. Four hours later she said it was finished and put it on Master Dragon's back and asked: "How does it feel?" Marko replied: "It is like nothing but," Rose hopped on his back, "but now I feel something."

The woman smiled and said, "that's right, so you will know if she's on your back or not." Rose got excited and said, "Let's go!" Marko thanked to the woman and flew away with Rose around the town, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes and more.

Three hours later it was midnight Marko looked around to see where the sun was. And it was a beautiful sundown. They both watched it for like seven minutes then decided to go back to the town. Then they spotted a campfire with people and dragons around so Marko and Rose went to them. They started singing and dancing with people, Rose's father, Laura and Master Dragon.

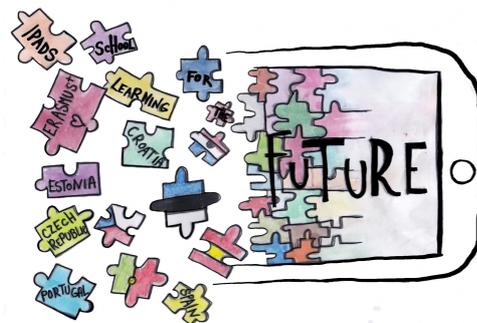
So, now they lived happily and Laura, Rose and Marko continued doing adventures. Meanwhile the old man and Master Dragon were having fun in town, telling tales, stories, dancing by campfire every night.



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The Golden Dragon



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- "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 like 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?"

Read a story about dragons and their journey to people.

