A Dragon's Tale

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As long as he could remember, he had heard stories about The Dragon. In his childhood, his mother had scared him about The Dragon doing horrible things to children if they didn't behave. But when he grep up, he heard more and more stories. Just as if the beast was alive. People would promise on their lives, that they had seen it. They would tell strange stories about it. When he had rescued that man from the next village. Or burned down that hut during the horrible storm last winter.

All his life, he had heard stories about The Dragon.

Just out of curiosity, he began to collect the stories. Soon, he was renown to know everything anyone had ever known about it. And the more he knew, the more he suspected that there might be some truth behind it. Of course, The Dragon could not be the large monster as some suspected, three stories high and sometimes more. He would have to be smaller. Maybe like a horse. Maybe like a large horse. Maybe intelligent. Probably not.

And he wondered if it lived, then where? So he was sucked into his daydream. Soon, people began to worry about him. Talked behind his back. Looked worriedly when he went for his long searches for something which did not exist.

Years went by. New stories showed up. Many of them probably made up but some, strange. Unexpected. Nourishing his hopes. So he went on in his quest.

But to no avail. Desperate and beaten, he returned from another futile trip, returning with his feet aching and his hands empty. Just as he entered the valley of their village, he saw them. His hands started to shake. Cold sweat on his face. Footprints. Sharp and angular. Scales. Too big for a bird. Too deep for anything that could fly. Too cold for any kind of lizard up here. Tears flowed down his cheeks. Cautious, he knelt besides them, as not to disturb their beauty. Stroking the earth with his hands where the beast has left his trail. Finally. He had done it. His heart full of joy, he stood, ready to show the world what he had achieved. Against all and everything. And there they were. His friends and acquaintances. Coming up the way. Waving.... Laughing. He ran to them, not believing his luck that they were here. Here were the track was. When he finally reached them, they looked at him and bursted out with laughter. Unable to stand, they fell to the ground holding their bellies. One waved with a strange metallic object. He could see the peaks and curves and he imagined, what it would look like if you would press it against the ground. Footprints. His expression froze on his face. Without looking back, he want past them. Rigid. Not showing his bleeding soul.

With that, he finally gave in. He would not talk about the dragon anymore. He would not think about it anymore. He sold his services as a ranger to merchants and other people trying going through the mountain range but he would never again mention the dragon.

After returning from a rather long and exhausting trip, he heard a strange sound behind him. Almost expecting another joke from his friends, he turned to see him.... The Dragon. The light reflecting from his scales. Deep green eyes. Muscular. A little larger than a horse. Head on a long winding neck. Staring at him. And him, staring back. Unbelieving. Seeing his dream. Breathing. Smelling it. He did not dare to reach out and touch it lest it be not real.

"I'f been thold you 'ere looging fer mee," said The Dragon in a strange hollow and hissing voice.

Baffled, the man could only stare. Patiently, The Dragon waited.

"You talk ...," mumbled the man finally.

"Zure," answered The Dragon, "and why not? Why iz mangind so arrogand to believe zat zey are the only onze to speak? Now, thell me, why do you zeekest me?"

"Finally!" the man bursted out, "I did it! I found