

Connor's Dragon

Connor believed in dragons. Every night he dreamt of soaring through the skies from the back of a great winged beast, swooping over fields and houses, yelling as the people below cried and cowered away from their power and their strength.

And every morning he woke up in his own cold bed. The only dragon he saw was the headmistress at his school.

One day, as Connor inched closer to the log burning stove, he was burnt. A single ember popped out of a log and hissed through the air. It landed on his arm and he jumped as if he had been stung. He glanced down and it was obvious that his skin had been damaged; a small blister was already forming. 'Ow,' he said – and thought nothing more of it.

That evening, he scratched the patch of white skin that had risen slightly from his forearm. It was itchy and warm. There were red marks around it as well but Connor didn't think much of it. After all, this was what you would expect with a burn wasn't it?

As he slept, Connor fidgeted and squirmed: his dreams were particularly vivid. He imagined himself perched right at the neck of a giant black dragon that spewed flames down onto his school and the supermarket and the metro station. Everybody ran from him: Connor, the King of the Dragons.

And as he slept, his arm swelled some more.

The following day, when Connor was sat at the table and enjoying his tea, his mam noticed the mark on his arm: 'That looks sore,' she said. 'What happened there?' Connor told her and his mam wrinkled her face. 'Well, that'll teach you to get so close to the fire', she scolded. Connor shrugged and rubbed his arm with his thumb.

The blister burst later on as he was watching television. Connor looked down and squeaked with surprise.

There, amongst the juice and the dead skin on his arm, there was a tiny little dragon. It jumped slightly and the littlest puff of smoke seeped out of its miniscule nose.

Connor rubbed his eyes with his free hand and stared down at the impossible creature. He quickly covered it and snuck upstairs to his bedroom. He had a small box that his mobile phone had come in and there was soft packaging there that he placed the miniature dragon on. Then he went to sleep – in case it was all in his mind again.

But the next morning, the dragon was still there and its skin was darker and Connor thought that it might even be a little bit bigger than it was a few hours previously. Its eyes were half open and they were of the deepest, darkest black. Connor watched the dragon – and the fragile creature watched him right back.

And into Connor's mind came the idea of food. Just the idea. He knew, but he wasn't sure how, that the dragon was hungry.

He crept downstairs and foraged for the smallest items he could find. He brought raisins and the seeds of pomegranates and he found a toothpick too. Using the toothpick he divided the raisins and the seeds into little pieces and he gently fed them into the little dragon's mouth.

And he decided that the dragon's name was Majestico.

But he didn't know why.

Over the coming days Majestico visibly grew. Connor moved from parts to whole raisins and then on to grapes and even little pieces of biscuits. Once, when Connor's finger moved close to Majestico, he thought that the tiny beast had bitten him. But it hadn't; there was a tendril of smoke rising from the box. The dragon had created a flame.

A week passed and the dragon became too big for the box. Connor moved it to a shoebox and then to an old toybox that he kept under his bed. He fed Majestico whole apples and even bits of meat. Once the dragon turned away from some cooked beef that Connor brought on a Sunday from his dinner.

But when he changed it for some chicken that had not been cooked, Majestico fired out a thin lance of flame and seared the meat brown before stretching out its scaly neck and swallowing it whole. This was a new development.

Connor knew that Majestico wanted more.

At the pet shop, Connor bought a new hamster.

You don't want to know what happened to it.

Or the rabbit. Or the goldfish. Or the guinea pig. Or next door's kitten.

He had to move Majestico to the shed. His mam didn't really notice; she was too busy at work.

And in the shed, Connor knew that his dreams were coming true. It wouldn't be long before he would be soaring through the skies, searing the school and the supermarket and the station. Connor would be the King of the Dragons.

Connor used to have a pet dog called Charlie but he didn't any more.

Majestico stretched out and belched lazily. It looked up at Connor who watched him with astounded eyes. Majestico placed image into Connor's mind of horses and cows, sheep and goats. 'How do I bring them to you?' Connor whispered.

And Majestico closed its black eyes. Then it opened them and a glittering fire flashed.

Connor believed in dragons.

With one snap of its amazing jaws, Majestico lashed out and set Connor alight. Connor froze in terrified shock – but only for a second. Then Majestico swallowed Connor whole. All the way. Quickly.

The dragon didn't believe in Connor, you see.