

THE LOST EGG

Elara pushed aside a curtain of ivy, her boots sinking into the soft moss of the enchanted forest. Sunlight trickled through the dense canopy, painting golden patterns on the ground. She had always been drawn to the unknown, but she never expected to find something truly extraordinary.

Nestled in a hollow at the base of an ancient tree was an egg—larger than any she'd ever seen. Its shell shimmered like polished turquoise, veins of gold running through it. Warmth pulsed beneath her fingers as she touched it.

A distant roar rumbled through the trees, but Elara barely noticed. The egg trembled. Then, with a sharp crack, a fissure split its surface. She gasped as the shell crumbled away, revealing a tiny dragon.

Its scales gleamed in hues of teal and copper, wings still damp and delicate. Large golden eyes blinked up at her before it let out a chirping squeak and nuzzled her palm.

Elara's heart clenched. "You're alone, aren't you?"

She wrapped the hatchling in her cloak, cradling it close. But before she could take another step, the ground trembled beneath her. The air grew heavy with power.

From the sky, shadows descended.

Three massive dragons landed in the clearing, their forms radiating ancient majesty. Their eyes—golden like the hatchling's—locked onto her. One, a towering beast with obsidian scales, stepped forward.

"You hold one of our own."

Elara's grip tightened around the baby dragon. It whimpered and buried its head against her chest.

She knew what she had to do.

Swallowing hard, she stepped forward and knelt, lifting the hatchling toward them.

"He was alone when I found him," she said. "I didn't want him to be scared."

The obsidian dragon studied her, then nudged the baby with its massive snout. The little one chirped but clung to Elara.

"He has bonded with you," another dragon, covered in emerald scales, observed. "Yet he is one of us."

Elara's chest ached. She had no claim over him. But the thought of letting him go twisted something deep inside her.

"If he stays with you, will he be safe?" she asked.

The dragons exchanged glances before the obsidian one rumbled, "Always."

She looked down at the little dragon. "You belong with your kind," she whispered. "But I'll never forget you."

Slowly, she set him down.

The baby dragon hesitated, eyes flicking between Elara and the elder dragons. Then, with a final affectionate chirp, he bounded toward them.

The obsidian dragon spread its wings, lifting into the sky with the others. As they disappeared into the clouds, Elara exhaled, wiping at her eyes.

The forest felt quieter, emptier.

Yet, as she turned to leave, a warm breeze curled around her—almost like a farewell.

And she knew, in her heart, that their paths would cross again.