

The Apple Pie Dragon



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

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High in the Smoky Mountains lived a dragon named Bram. He had warm moss-green scales, a soft golden underbelly, and big friendly amber eyes. While other dragons practiced roaring and breathing fire, Bram spent his days dreaming of something much sweeter: baking. He loved the smell of cinnamon and the feel of soft dough under his claws. More than anything, Bram loved apple pie.



One sunny morning, Bram tied a flour-dusted white apron around his round middle and wrapped a red-and-white checkered neckerchief around his neck. 'Today is the day,' he said. He had cleaned out a cozy corner of his mountain cave and set up a little bakery. There was a wooden counter, a stone oven, and shelves waiting for pies. Bram smiled. His dream was finally coming true.



Bram's first customer was Pip, a tiny grey mouse with a bright smile. Pip wore a little blue vest with brass buttons and a tiny baker's cap. 'I heard a dragon was opening a bakery!' Pip squeaked. 'I'm here to help!' Bram was delighted. Pip would taste pies, fetch apples, and cheer him on. Together, they set to work, ready to bake the very first apple pie in the mountain.



Bram rolled out the dough and piled it high with sweet apples and cinnamon. Then he took a deep breath and blew a gentle flame into the stone oven. But his fire breath was too hot! The pie came out burnt and black. Smoke filled the cave. Bram's shoulders drooped. 'Oh no,' he sighed. 'My first pie is ruined.' Pip coughed and waved the smoke away. 'Don't worry, Bram. We can try again!'



The next day, Bram tried once more. He blew a little softer, but still the pie turned dark and crispy. 'Maybe baking isn't for dragons,' Bram moaned. Just then, Hazel the hedgehog arrived with a basket of apples. She wore a knitted mustard-yellow scarf and a patient smile. 'I heard about your bakery,' she said. 'Keep trying, Bram. Every baker burns a pie or two.'



Bram didn't give up. He practiced every day, trying to control his fiery breath. Sometimes he blew too hard, and sometimes too soft. Pies turned black, then brown, then almost golden. Pip tasted each one and gave helpful advice. 'A little less heat on the left side,' Pip said. 'And maybe a little more on the right.' Bram nodded and tried again. Each try made him better.



One afternoon, Gran Owl flew down from the village. She was the oldest and wisest owl around, with speckled wings and small round spectacles perched on her beak. She wrapped her lavender shawl tightly and watched Bram at work. 'A dragon who bakes,' she said kindly. 'How wonderful! But you must measure your heat, dear. Try holding your breath for three counts before you blow.'



Bram listened carefully. He took a deep breath, held it for three counts, and blew a slow, gentle flame. This time, the pie came out golden and perfect! The crust was flaky, and the apples were sweet and soft. Pip squeaked with joy. Hazel clapped her little paws. 'You did it, Bram!' they cheered. Bram's amber eyes shone. He had finally learned to control his fire breath.



Word spread quickly about the dragon's delicious apple pies. Friends from all around came to taste them. Rabbits, squirrels, and birds lined up outside the cave. Bram's bakery was always warm and cozy, smelling of cinnamon and friendship. Pip and Hazel helped serve the pies, and Gran Owl often visited for a slice. Bram was the happiest dragon in the mountains.



One day, a young dragon named Ember visited the bakery. 'I like to paint,' Ember said shyly, 'but other dragons laugh at me.' Bram smiled warmly. 'Everyone can choose their own interests,' he said. 'I chose baking, and it made me happy. You should paint if it makes you happy too.' Ember's eyes lit up. Bram gave Ember a slice of pie, and they became friends.



From that day on, Bram's bakery became a place for everyone. There were always fresh pies, warm smiles, and the smell of cinnamon in the air. Bram showed everyone that a dragon can choose his own path. Friendship and yummy pie, he learned, are the best treats of all. And every pie he baked was golden, delicious, and made with love.



The seasons changed, and Bram's bakery grew busier than ever. He baked apple pies, berry pies, and even tiny pies for the smallest mice. Pip and Hazel were always by his side, and Gran Owl often shared her wise advice. Bram never forgot how hard it was at first, and he always encouraged new bakers. 'Keep trying,' he would say. 'And always measure your heat!'



One crisp autumn morning, Bram decided to teach a baking class. All his friends gathered in the cozy cave. Pip handed out tiny aprons, and Hazel passed around baskets of apples. Bram showed everyone how to roll dough and control the oven's heat. 'A dragon's breath can be gentle,' he said, blowing a soft flame. The class clapped and cheered. Everyone learned something new that day.



As the sun set over the mountains, Bram sat outside his cave with his friends. They shared a warm apple pie and watched the stars twinkle. 'You know,' Bram said, 'I used to think being a dragon meant only breathing fire. But now I know it means choosing what makes you happy.' Pip nodded. 'And making yummy pies for friends!' Everyone laughed and took another bite.



Bram's bakery became famous throughout the land. Travelers came from far away to taste his golden apple pies. But Bram never forgot what mattered most: friendship, kindness, and the courage to try. He kept a sign above the cave that read, 'Everyone can choose their own interests.' And every dragon who visited learned that they too could follow their dreams, no matter what others said.



And so, Dragon Bram lived happily in his mountain cave, baking pies and sharing smiles. His fire breath was never too hot again, and his heart was always full. Friends from all around came to taste his treats and share his warmth. Bram had chosen his own path, and it led to the best treats of all: friendship, kindness, and a perfect golden apple pie.