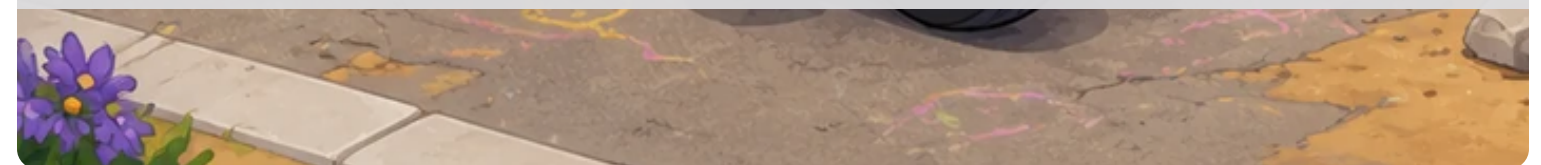




Leo's Backyard Dragon Barbecue

Becky Pearce





Three-year-old Leo puts on his favorite red cape and climbs onto his shiny blue tricycle. Attached to the back is a small red wagon filled with juicy hot dogs and sweet marshmallows, ready for a big adventure.



As Leo pedals down his sidewalk, he spots a pair of bright green, scaly wings peeking out from Mr. Smith's overgrown rose bushes. He stops his tricycle and gasps in delight as a friendly, small dragon sneezes a tiny puff of smoke.



Leo reaches into his trailer and holds out a shiny red apple to the bush-dwelling dragon. The creature's amber eyes light up, and it gently steps out of the leaves, instantly won over by the tasty treat.



Continuing his search down the lane, Leo looks up and notices a brilliant blue dragon sunbathing peacefully on top of Mrs. Higgins' warm garage roof. Leo rings his tricycle bell with a loud clang to get its attention.



Leo wafts the scent of sweet barbecue sauce up toward the roof, making the blue dragon's tummy rumble loudly. The dragon happily slides down the garage shingles and takes its place right behind Leo's wagon.



In the middle of the neighborhood park, Leo discovers a magnificent purple dragon playing hide-and-seek behind the big oak tree. Leo waves a bag of fluffy white marshmallows, inviting the playful beast to join his parade.



With three happy, colorful dragons following closely behind his tricycle, Leo proudly leads the magical procession back up his driveway. His parents stand by the smoking backyard grill, waving and smiling at their unusual, giant party guests.



The backyard transforms into a lively festival as Leo hands out hot dogs to his new reptilian friends. The green dragon uses its gentle fiery breath to perfectly toast a marshmallow for Leo, who giggles with joy.



All the neighborhood children look over the fence in awe, cheering as the blue dragon lifts Leo up for a safe, swirling ride through the backyard air. The party is filled with laughter, music, and the delicious smell of grilled food.



As the sun sets and paints the sky in shades of pink and orange, the full, happy dragons curl up in the soft green grass. Tired from his big day, Leo cuddles against the purple dragon's warm tummy, falling asleep under the stars.