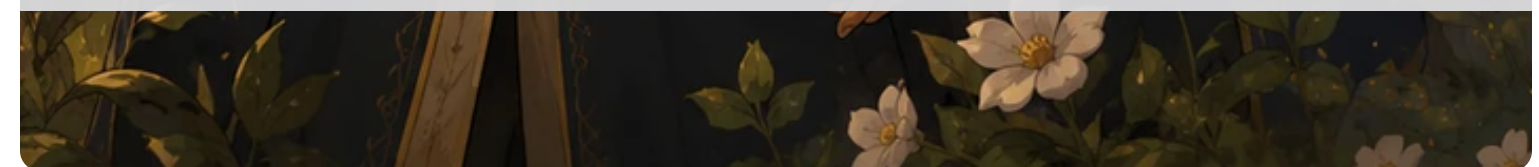




The Prince of Compassion and the Shadow Dragon

Rishona Shaffy Rabi





Long ago, in a kingdom hidden beyond the mountains, lived Prince Elian, a young man with dark curly hair and a heart of gold. He spent his days in the royal gardens, gently feeding the birds and mending the wings of fallen butterflies.



One day, a thick gray mist rolled over the land, stealing the sun's warmth and silencing the birds. From the highest peak, a jealous dragon, shrouded in shadows and followed by a murder of ravens, cast a curse upon the kingdom.



While the knights reached for their heavy swords, Prince Elian packed only a small bag of seeds and a flask of water. He knew that the darkness could not be fought with steel, so he set off toward the cursed tower to save his people.



His journey led him into the heart of the Enchanted Forest, where the trees whispered secrets and the roots tried to trip his feet. There, he found a giant stag trapped in a web of thorny vines, its eyes wide with fear and pain.



Instead of cutting the vines with a blade, Elian spoke softly and used his gentle hands to untangle the thorns one by one. Grateful, the stag bowed its head and offered to carry the prince through the deepest, darkest parts of the woods.



They arrived at the base of a jagged, black tower that pierced the clouds like a broken tooth. A swirl of dark mist and cawing ravens circled the summit, where the dragon watched with eyes like cold, glowing embers.



Eliau climbed the winding stairs until he stood before the dragon, who roared with a sound like crashing stones. The dragon expected a fight, but Eliau simply looked at the creature with sadness and asked why it felt so alone.



As the dragon prepared to breathe fire, Elian noticed a shard of dark glass embedded in the dragon's chest near its heart. He stepped forward fearlessly and gently pulled the shard away, replacing the cold void with a warm, comforting touch.



The dark mist evaporated instantly, and the dragon's scales turned from soot-black to a shimmering, radiant gold. The ravens flew away, replaced by singing larks, as the dragon realized that it no longer needed to be feared to be loved.



Prince Elian returned home as a wise and beloved ruler, with the golden dragon acting as the kingdom's loyal protector. Under his reign, the land became a sanctuary where humans and animals lived in perfect harmony forever.