

First Place – Children’s Fiction

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The Dragon and the Butterfly

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A dragon roamed far and wide searching for treasures to adorn his cave in the mountain. Every day he searched for sparkling gold and glowing jewels. Every night he enjoyed dancing over his gold, as it glowed by the light of his flames. Occasionally, he wished he had someone to dance with, but it never bothered him for long.

One day, as he explored, he glimpsed a glimmer of gold. It was dancing up and down, all around in a meadow of flowers. Coming closer he saw it was a beautiful golden butterfly. How wonderful that butterfly would look dancing above his piles of gold. He decided to catch it and take it home as his treasure. He dipped and dived, swooped and spun, tumbling and tossed... but could not catch the butterfly. The dragon grew so tired of chasing the butterfly that he plopped down on the grass, exhausted. The butterfly landed on his nose.

“Hello, little butterfly,” the dragon said. “Will you come to my cave with me? It sparkles and shimmers with gold, just like you.”

The butterfly agreed. The dragon carried the butterfly on his nose. That night, to the glow of dragon’s fire, the butterfly danced in the air. The gold sparkled, the jewels glimmered, and the butterfly, most beautiful of all, flew spinning and swirling through the air. Delighted, the dragon

watched the butterfly and his treasures sparkle together. In the morning, as the butterfly flew to the cave door, the dragon blocked its way.

“You cannot leave,” the dragon said. “You will stay here—forever.”

The butterfly tried to dart outside, but the dragon sent a burst of flame to block the door, forcing the butterfly to stay. All-day the butterfly flew slower and slower. Without sunshine and flowers, it was growing weaker. That night, the gold sparkled, the jewels glimmered, and the butterfly, most beautiful of all, flew spinning and swirling through the air until it grew too tired and folded its wings to rest. The dragon frowned but was still satisfied the butterfly was his. In the morning, again the butterfly tried to leave, but it was too weak. When night came, the gold sparkled, the jewels glimmered, but the butterfly, most beautiful of all, didn't spin or swirl. It sat in the corner, wings folded. It could not fly.

All night the dragon watched the sparkle of his gold, but could not enjoy it. He tried to dance as he had before, but his eyes kept falling on the drooping and dull butterfly, remembering how beautiful it had been before. His night was completely ruined.

As the sun rose over the meadow, the dragon settled onto the flowers and gently lay the butterfly upon the ground. The sun warmed the golden wings and they fluttered faintly.

The dragon plucked a flower and placed it before the butterfly. The butterfly drank some of the nectar. Soon the butterfly stretched out its wings and soared into the sky. It flew spinning and swirling through the air once more.

The dragon watched a moment, then turned toward home. He didn't feel like searching for treasures today.

As he spread his wings, suddenly a tiny weight landed on his nose. The butterfly fluttered around the dragon's head, inviting him to dance in the meadow with it. He looked around. Hundreds of golden butterflies danced in the meadow's morning light. The dragon rose into the air and danced with the butterflies, a smile spreading from his face to his heart.