

My Dragon Name is Misora

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My Dragon Name is Misora

A long time ago, in the Japan of old, people believed they lived side by side with an unseen world. The people of Japan told stories about yokai and spirits to explain mysterious things or teach lessons. They could look like animals, strange monsters, and some even took human form. Some were funny, some were scary, and others were just mischievous. Rooted in ancient traditions, these beings bound the people to nature and to each other, adding a little magic into their daily life and culture. This story takes place just beyond the coast of Japan, on an island nestled in the horizon, where the sun dips. The island itself was scattered with lush mountains and narrow streams.

The people living there lived in small wooden houses, connected by worn foot-trodden paths. In one of these houses lived Misora, a young girl with raven black hair and a vivid imagination, turning every stick into a sword, and every broom into a horse.

Misora called her father Ootosan. Ootosan was a quiet, matter-of-fact man whose imagination had drowned in the pursuit of knowledge and facts after years of teaching at the university on the mainland of Japan. It left him somewhat awkward and reluctant when playing. Nevertheless, he always

tried to join in on Misora's games. He took instructions well, and that was enough for Misora.

She called her mother Okasan. She was a warm and kind-hearted woman with sparkling eyes. A natural storyteller with a vivid imagination, she could turn anything into a fairy tale. Children would flock to her, eager to hear her transform the most mundane things into stories brimming with magic and endless possibilities. It was clear that Misora had inherited her gift for finding wonder in the ordinary from her mother. Okasan worked at a preschool just a few houses down from their own.

From the outside, they were exactly what you'd expect: a perfectly average family with the usual ups, downs, and everything in between.

It was a sunny afternoon, and Misora stood on a tree stump. She was wearing an old sweater that was much too big for her. It had been altered with leaf-like pieces of fabric, meant to resemble dragon scales. She roared at her father, who slowly approached. He was wrapped in an old blanket and holding a wooden katana. He was a samurai.

"Save me, brave warrior!" a fearful voice called out from behind Misora.

Misora's mother was clutching an old and tattered kimono, and she was wearing a homemade tiara. She was a terrified princess in distress, and she played her role well.

As the samurai approached, the dragon spoke.

“I will offer you a choice, samurai. I can burn your cities, melt your mountains, and dry up your oceans with fire. Or ... you can leave the princess with me, and I’ll simply cease to exist.”

“Did your mother tell you to say that?” he asked as he broke character.

“No one tells a dragon what to say,” Misora said in the deepest voice she could muster.

“It’s just a little violent?” he said and looked to Okasan. “Could the dragons say something like ‘I’ll burn your hair off?’ Or ‘I’ll smash your houses with my tale?’” Otosan suggested.

“No!” Misora and her mother answered in unison.

Misora’s father collected himself and took a breath before getting back into character.

“I’ll fill up on your bones,” Misora growled as she saw he was back in the game.

Otosan took the dragon’s words a little too literally, as he countered,

“Your weight assessment might be slightly off. I’m barely a snack.”

Misora rolled her eyes and smiled, “Close enough.”

The father nodded, pleased with himself.

Misora shouted and hissed as she leapt down and charged at Otosan, as the game continued.

That evening, the three of them sat close together on the old wooden bench in the garden. Above them, countless stars

seemed to glow in competition with one another. Misora leaned against Okasan, her small hand resting in her mother's lap, while Otosan sat silently, gazing upward.

"Do you see the moon, Misora?" Okasan said as she pointed to the sky. "It's not just a rock in the sky. It's a magical sphere where a water spirit sits."

Misora looked at Okasan in disbelief.

"Every night, he steps out of the ocean and into the sphere. The starlight lights up his body, so all the animals in the forest can sleep in his gentle light," Okasan continued, pausing briefly before adding, "Without him, the night would be dark and lonely."

"Is that true?" Misora asked as she turned to Otosan.

Otosan hesitated, his fingers curling nervously around the edge of the bench. He wanted to explain what he knew: that the moon was a satellite, a lifeless rock that simply reflected the sun's light. But it wasn't the time, so he played along.

"That's why we have tides. He's so big that when he steps out of the ocean, the shoreline pulls back. Just like the water level drops when you step out of a bathtub," Otosan added.

He glanced at Okasan, who smiled back, clearly impressed by his contribution to the story.

Misora leaned forward, staring at the moon, as if she might catch a glimpse of the water spirit.

Just then, a heavy drop of water landed on her cheek. Then another, and another after that.

"We'd better go inside," Otosan said, rising from the bench and reaching for Misora's hand.

Misora groaned in protest but stood up reluctantly.

“Don’t worry,” Okasan said. “The water spirit will still be there tomorrow night,” she chuckled.

Together, they hurried into the house, the rain falling harder as they crossed the garden.

Parents watch their sleeping children the way the moon watches over a tranquil sea, pondering the depths of their potential and what kind of person they will one day be.

In this way, Misora’s parents stood silently in the doorway of her bedroom, their silhouettes framed by the dim hallway light. The air between them was heavy with unspoken thoughts. Ootosan’s brow furrowed as his gaze settled on Misora’s peaceful face, lost in the stillness that only sleep could bring. But there was a quiet tug of doubt that gnawed at the edges of Ootosan’s mind, a problem he couldn’t simply reason away.

He glanced at Okasan, his expression shadowed by doubt. She, in contrast, appeared calm, her eyes distant, as though seeing something beyond the small, cozy space of their daughter’s room.

“Do you ever worry we’re doing her a disservice? Telling her these stories like they’re real?” Ootosan asked quietly.

Silence sat between them as Okasan considered his words, her expression thoughtful.

Finally, she placed a gentle hand on his arm, her touch steady and reassuring.

“The truth has rules, but stories make their own. She has her whole life to learn what’s real and what’s not, what she can and cannot do,” she smiled gently.

Otosan sighed, his concern softening as it settled over him what she meant. The stories weren’t meant to mislead, but to give Misora something precious: a world where spirits roamed freely and the moon danced with tides, a space where the impossible could live on for a little while.

The weight in the room lightened as Okasan leaned gently against him, her smile a quiet reminder of the beauty they were crafting for their daughter.

The door closed softly behind them as they left Misora to her dreams; dreams that paint grey skies blue and turn silence into song.

The day everything changed for the small family was much like any other.

Whenever they could, they spent their time sailing together. Her father would snooze at the stern, the tiller tucked under his arm, while her mother read books aloud, using funny voices. There was one particular book that Misora cherished above all others. It was a story about a lonely giant—the last of his kind—who pushed the sun around in a large wheelbarrow. It was called *The Last Giant*, and Misora had listened to it countless times, never growing tired of it.

They didn’t know yet, but that mild summer’s day, as Misora and her parents drifted peacefully at sea, would change

their lives forever. A sudden gust of wind ripped her father's hat from his head, and as he stood to catch it, he saw a wave so enormous, it left him speechless. The wave rose with terrifying speed, and before they could react, it crashed down upon them, flipping the boat upside down.

Despite the many hours Misora and her parents had spent at sea, they had never gotten around to teaching her how to swim. So Misora kicked and grabbed the water, but she went nowhere.

As she struggled to make it to the surface, a passing manatee suddenly stopped right in front of her. Like Misora, it seemed bewildered by the strange encounter. They locked eyes for a moment, before a muffled boom erupted, sending them spinning, and darkness slowly closed in on Misora.

Misora woke from a sleep that felt a hundred nights deep, a sleep heavier than any she had ever known. She sat up, disoriented and confused by the silence and the fact that no one was there.

Her dragon sweater lay on the floor, so she pulled it on and stepped into the hallway.

A faint whisper drifted through the air as she approached her parents' bedroom door. The door felt heavier than usual, as though sorrow itself pressed against it, resisting her entrance.

As she entered the small bedroom, she saw that it was cramped with people. Some whispered among themselves, while others wore faces etched with worry.

Her father knelt beside the bed, clutching Okasan's hand as she lay unconscious, her face peaceful and seemingly unharmed, except for a small cut on her forehead.

The doctor stepped away from the bedside, his expression grim as he shook his head.

"Coma. It might be days, it might be weeks. There's no way to know," he said quietly, packing his bag without meeting Otosan's eyes.

Behind the doctor stood a small row of men in uniform. One of them stepped forward, removed his cap, and began to explain. He told the room about a bomb the military had tested too close to land, which had caused a wave of unexpected proportions. The family would be generously compensated, he assured them, his words formal and well rehearsed.

But compensation was the last thing on Otosan's mind, and he glared at the uniformed man as tears ran down his cheeks. His hands trembled as he struggled to suppress the rage that grew inside him. The soldier's expression faltered, realizing his final words had been ill-timed. He stepped back into the line of uniformed men.

Then the soldiers bowed and began to leave. The friends and family followed along and scuttled out of the room. A friend of the family gently took Misora by the hand, guiding her along as the last few people left. As the door closed behind them, Otosan began to sob, burying his head against his unconscious wife.

Later that evening, Ootosan awoke, still halfway on the bed, having dozed off.

He thought of Misora and searched her room before he hurried downstairs to the kitchen. Here, he found her sitting at the table, staring blankly at a sandwich.

“Do you want it? One of the soldiers made it for me, but I can’t eat anything,” Misora asked, pushing the plate towards him.

He shook his head, feeling no appetite either. He sat down and noticed she had put on her dragon costume. But he decided not to ask about it.

“How did we get home?” Misora whispered.

“You don’t remember?” he asked.

Misora shook her head.

Ootosan took a deep breath and began to explain. He told her how he had placed her and Okasan on a piece of floating debris, pushing it forward with every ounce of strength he had. The raft had barely moved, but then a battered fishing boat appeared. Tossed by the waves, but still intact, the fishermen pulled them aboard. Ootosan collapsed from exhaustion, and after that, he assumed someone from the military must have brought them home.

When he finished, Misora sat quietly, her fingers resting on the edge of the plate. Ootosan leaned forward, his arms folded on the table, staring at nothing in particular. The kitchen was silent except for the faint chirping of crickets outside the window.

Neither felt like eating, and neither wanted to go to sleep. So they stayed where they were, side by side, lost in their thoughts.

A few days later, Otosan went to the local market to buy groceries. On his way, he biked past rice fields, cattle herders, and street vendors selling dingy goods.

News of the accident had spread across the island, and as he passed familiar faces, they bowed their heads in quiet condolence. Though he appreciated their kindness, he tried not to think about it and kept pedalling.

The wind carried the scent of fish and saltwater, as merchants stacked crates filled with mackerel, sardines, and countless other aquatic creatures, their silvery scales glinting in the sunlight. Otosan had never before noticed how strongly the market smelled of the sea. The sharp smell distracted him, and he wandered aimlessly until he stopped at a small bookstall. One book immediately caught his attention: *The Last Giant*, its title carved in gold letters. The book seemed to hypnotize him, and he stood frozen, staring at it.

Suddenly, he noticed his feet were cold. Looking down, he saw water rising around him. He glanced around, but no one else seemed to notice or care. The water rose quickly, forcing him on his toes to keep his head above it. Nothing floated; everyone simply leaned into the water, as if bracing against a strong wind. He held his breath as the water closed in over his head. Then he felt a small hand grasp his own, and the water vanished.

“Are you alright?” Misora’s small voice broke through his confusion.

He looked around, disoriented and embarrassed—he had forgotten he’d brought Misora to the market.

The old woman at the bookstall sensed hardship and pressed the book into his hands.

“It’s free,” she said with a smile. “But you’ll need to make up your own ending—the last pages are missing. Eager grandkids,” she explained as she wiggled her fingers playfully.

Otosan took the book and turned to Misora. “I’m fine,” he assured her softly. “Just tired.”

That evening, Otosan stood absent-minded in the kitchen as fish simmered on the pan. It wasn’t until a sizzling droplet seared his hand that he snapped out of his trance.

Startled, he grabbed the pan and set it hastily on the kitchen table. His eyes fell on the book from the market. Glancing out the window, he saw Misora wandering aimlessly through the garden, still wearing the dragon scale sweater. He grabbed the book and called Misora as he stepped outside.

They sat on the bench, and he started to read out loud.

A few pages in, Otosan could tell that she was listening, but more so out of courtesy than curiosity. He knew he lacked the mother’s more lively way of reading. He closed the book discouraged.

Looking up at the sky, a thought stirred in his mind.

“The truth has rules, but stories make their own ...” he murmured.

Misora tilted her head and asked, confused, “What does that mean?”

“Okasan never told you where to find the giant?” he asked, giving her a playful look.

“I thought giants weren’t real?” Misora frowned.

Otosan’s gaze didn’t waver.

“This one is,” he smiled confidently.

“Can I meet him?” she asked almost immediately.

Otosan leaned in closer, as if sharing a secret meant only for her.

“There’s a hill beyond the small bamboo forest at the edge of the village. Climb it just before sunrise, and he should be there to put up the sun,” he explained.

“What should I say to him?”

“Anything you wish,” Otosan replied with a soft chuckle.

So it was, that early next morning, Misora sprinted through rice fields and large patches of swaying grass, her heart racing with anticipation.

Her eyes widened at the sight of a colossal figure pushing a wheelbarrow up the hill. Before she could react, she found herself standing behind the massive creature, her words tangled in her mind, speechless and awestruck.

The giant sensed her presence and turned around. He smiled as if he saw an old friend. Then he crouched and rested his

elbows on his knees. His face looked like that of a bison, but on the body of a long-haired gorilla. He introduced himself:

“My name is Tomo,” he said, his deep voice rumbling. “I am the caretaker of the sun.”

Misora hesitated, feeling silly for having shown up in her dragon sweater.

“You must be the smallest dragon I’ve ever seen,” Tomo said as he studied her.

“I’m not really a dragon ... I just pretend to be one,” she admitted, embarrassed.

“Giants pretend all the time. Pretending is just practising for when the truth comes,” he said with a knowing smile.

Tomo sensed that she was nervous and added gently, “I have to put up the sun now so the farmers can harvest their crops, and the fishermen can pull their nets. Will you tell me about yourself afterwards?”

Misora nodded and then watched as Tomo lifted the glowing ember of the sun from his wheelbarrow. Stretching his arms, he released it into the sky, where it began to rise. Then, he blew into a horn hanging by his side. It sounded like an odd, yet comforting growl. Like a large dog being scratched behind the ears.

The flames inside the sun grew as the sun rose higher. Its warmth filled the air, and a blend of orange and red filled the sky. Misora realized she was seeing a sunrise and how it came to be. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

The two soon-to-be friends sat side by side on the sunlit hill, the afternoon breeze weaving through the grass around them.

At first, their conversation was slow, a few words exchanged here and there, but Misora was shy, and words were hard to find.

Trying to break the silence, Tomo asked, “So ... what’s your dragon name?”

Misora blinked, caught off guard. She’d never thought about having a different name, let alone a dragon name.

After a brief pause, she straightened her shoulders and said with quiet certainty, “My dragon name is Misora.”

Tomo grinned, “Hmm. Bold choice. No disguise, no falsehood—just you.”

A faint smile tugged at Misora’s lips as she twisted a dragon scale between her fingers. She knew what he was trying to do, but opening up was hard, and silence soon returned.

Tomo had an idea and pulled out a large pipe, then ripped a small tree from the ground with ease. Crumbling it between his fingers, he stuffed the shredded bark and leaves into the pipe.

Then, he held up a piece of glass, angling it towards the sun. A concentrated ray of light beamed through the glass, igniting the pipe. He puffed his pipe thoughtfully, the smoke forming clouds that drifted into the sky. Misora and Tomo laughed as they guessed what the clouds looked like.

“That one looks like a rabbit,” Misora said, pointing to a fluffy shape that seemed to hop across the sky. Tomo chuckled. His warm laugh calmed Misora’s nerves.

“A rabbit? More like a dragon with tiny wings,” he replied, squinting thoughtfully.

The two of them spent the day trading guesses and bursts of laughter, as each plume of smoke painted something familiar in the sky.

For just a little while, it felt as though the world had shrunk to this hilltop, and it was as if the two new friends were all there was and ever would be.

Misora and Tomo talked until nightfall, and as the fire inside the sun faded, Tomo summoned the sun back into his hands and laid it to rest in the large wheelbarrow. Its dim light acted as a lantern in the night, as Misora shared everything about the accident and her mother’s condition.

Tomo listened in silence, then took a deep breath.

“Have you noticed there’s no moon?” he asked, his gaze fixed on a dark patch in the sky.

Misora followed his eyes and realized the moon was gone.

“I think you and I are bound by destiny. I, too, have lost someone to the sea,” Tomo said.

Then he told her about a water-spirit called Nami and a girl who fell into the ocean long ago. Nami had rescued her, and for his kindness, the girl promised him eternal friendship. They met every day, and for as long as their friendship lasted, the seas were calm and merciful.

But one day, the girl stopped coming.

Heartbroken, Nami raged against the land, dragging innocent people into the ocean in his desperate search for his friend. To the people, it appeared as a tsunami, unstoppable and devastating, with waves crashing relentlessly onto the shore.

Eventually, a giant decided to capture the water spirit inside the moon. But Nami pulled the giant with him inside the spellbound prison, as it sank to the bottom of the ocean, where it has remained to this day.

When Misora asked if they couldn't simply free the giant and try again to catch the water spirit, Tomo explained it would betray the wishes of the giant who sacrificed itself for the wellbeing of the people on the island.

"That doesn't seem fair," Misora said, frowning.

Tomo paused. "When fairness falters, endurance must prevail."

Misora shook her head. "It's still not fair."

Tomo gave a faint smile. "No, it is not."

The following morning, Otosan woke to the sound of splashing water. He peered out the window and saw Misora flailing in a small metal tub, the water sloshing over the edges. Alarmed, he rushed downstairs and stepped outside.

"What are you doing?" he asked, his voice tight with concern.

"Learning to swim," Misora replied without looking up.

"If I'd known how to swim, maybe I could have helped Mother."

Otosan sat down on the ground. He wished to explain that it wouldn't have changed anything.

Misora, sensing his hesitation, continued. "This is important," she said firmly. "If we ever go sailing again, I need to know how to swim."

Otosan didn't protest. Instead, he sat quietly, observing her as she splashed and tumbled in the shallow water. He ran his hands through the cool grass, and it made him think of Misora's silky hair. "Silken locks, stubborn thoughts," he mused, struck by how fierce and unbreakable his daughter was. "Tell me something true," Misora said suddenly, interrupting his thoughts.

"Why?" he asked, confused.

Misora stood up and shrugged. "Okasan tells stories. You tell the truth."

Otosan sat still, searching for the right words.

"As far as we can tell, the Earth spins beneath our feet—carrying us at a speed unmatched by anything humankind can reach, yet we feel no motion at all. But the thought of losing you shakes the very ground where I sit."

After a moment, Misora climbed out of the tub and ran to him, wrapping her arms around his shoulders in a tight embrace.

"You'll never lose me," Misora promised. "I'm like the note tucked in your pocket you forgot was there."

Otosan chuckled and whispered, "I know," as he wiped tears from his eyes.

They remained like that, wrapped in each other's arms, neither willing to let go.

That afternoon, Misora's grandfather arrived, his walking stick tapping softly against the garden path. He moved at a snail's pace, each step measured and slow, unintentionally testing Misora and Ootosan's patience. With a quiet sigh, he eased himself onto the wooden bench, his movements careful and unhurried.

Then, with a small chuckle and a knowing glance, he said, "What age takes in speed, it returns in wisdom."

His weathered face carried a quiet strength, as he turned to his son and spoke of family and the importance of leaning on one another in times of uncertainty. His hand rested firmly on Ootosan's shoulder, reminding him he wasn't facing it alone.

After a long silence Ootosan exhaled, his voice barely above a whisper. "I'm not ready to let her go. I don't think I ever will be."

The old man paused, his gaze steady and kind.

"To let go is not to lose. It is to allow life to flow as it always has. Holding on too tightly is like trying to capture water in your hands—the tighter you grip, the more it slips away," he explained.

His point was that letting go isn't about giving up hope, but finding peace within the unknown. "Memories," he continued, "they endure regardless of what happens, and we honour those who live in these memories by living fully."

Ootosan's expression softened, as he looked at Misora, recognizing the truth in his father's words. He couldn't stay

frozen by fear; he had to face each moment with courage, no matter what happened.

Misora leaned into her father, offering silent support. He put his arm around her, pulling her close. Together, they watched the sunlight warm the garden, silently preparing themselves for whatever lay ahead.

Enough time had passed since Misora first met Tomo, and she had grown more confident and at ease in his presence. So much that she had asked him to teach her how to swim.

He sat waist-deep in the ocean, his hands cupped as water trickled through his fingers. Waves gently lapped at his feet while he watched Misora joyfully splash around, practising her swimming within the safety of his large hands. Misora paused and gave Tomo a curious look.

“What was the giant’s name—the one who captured the water spirit?” Misora asked, her tone more direct than she intended.

“Yuna,” Tomo replied softly, his gaze distant, as if searching the waves for something lost.

“She was the keeper of the moon, just as I am the keeper of the sun.”

Misora hesitated before asking, “And what happened to the girl Nami tried to find?”

Tomo explained that the water spirit had failed to notice his friend growing older. She had likely succumbed to the passage of time.

After a while, Misora asked hesitantly, “Will you live longer than me?”

Tomo’s expression tightened. It was not something he liked to dwell on.

“It is the nature of my kind. But even we are bound by time, just as you are.”

Misora frowned as she pondered his words.

“Will you miss me when I’m gone?” Misora asked, her voice soft but steady.

Tomo nodded, his expression unreadable.

“I will miss you greatly. But I know you will be where dreams go when they drift away,” he said as his eyes softened and he looked down at her. “I will dream of you until my final dream, where all dreams weave into one, and there, we will find each other again.”

Misora smiled, comforted by his words, though their meaning still felt uncertain.

Tomo drained the water through his fingers and placed Misora on his shoulder. Then he blew his horn, the sun slowly lowered itself, and the two sat together in silence as they took in the colours of the sunset.

That evening, after Tomo had taken down the sun, he and Misora stood quietly, gazing at the countless lights scattered across the night sky. Tomo’s eyes lingered on a set of stars that felt unfamiliar, but after such a long day, he dismissed the thoughts of what they could be.

As they made their way down the hill, a strange sensation prickled their skin, like a warning. Turning back, Tomo realized the unfamiliar stars weren't stars at all. They were the glowing eyes of a monstrous creature.

A stone-like dragon descended with a thunderous landing, shaking the ground beneath their feet. Its body was riddled with deep cracks, like a shattered statue pieced back together. It roared, steam hissing from its nostrils, and it stared them down before speaking its name.

"I am Jakuu, the shadow in the light, the rightful ruler of all that you see. Bow to me, or be devoured by darkness," he growled confidently.

His every movement was theatrical and calculated, as if he seemed certain Tomo would kneel.

"I know who you are. You bring darkness, whether we submit or not," Tomo resisted.

"Ah, the thrill of rebellion! I do admire a spirited end, but I promise it will be quite brief for you."

Jakuu's cocky demeanour shifted in an instant, giving way to a wild, untamed ferocity. With a sudden burst of speed, he charged at Tomo, and the two titans collided with earth-shaking force.

"Run! Find shelter!" Tomo yelled out to Misora.

The two fought like wild dogs—growling, biting, and wrestling each other to the ground in a savage struggle.

Misora had not made it far before she stopped, turning back to see Tomo fall. He rose quickly and scanned the ground, then slammed his hand into the earth, pulling free a massive sword. Ancient roots snapped like threads as he wrenched the sword from the soil.

The fight went on. But despite Tomo's skill and the power of his blade, Jakuu's sheer strength was overwhelming. The ground trembled with each clash, as Tomo's sword struck sparks against Jakuu's stone hide. Jakuu countered with devastating blows, hurling Tomo back with his immense fists. The air filled with the sound of shattering rock and the metallic ring of steel.

Jakuu seemed unstoppable, and yet. He casually stepped away and seemed unfazed by it all.

"Your struggle is charming, in the way a fly thinks it can bother a storm," he said suddenly, and with one last menacing glare, he launched himself into the air.

"Once I've regained my enthusiasm, I'll be back to show you a truly devastating finale," he cackled as he disappeared into the night sky.

Tomo staggered, nearly collapsing from exhaustion. Misora rushed to his side, her face pale with fear. "What is he, Tomo?" she asked, her voice trembling.

Tomo steadied himself, his breathing laboured. "Jakuu is a world-eater," he said grimly. "A yokai cursed by an uncontrollable desire to rule, and an endless hunger. He devours not just life, but the essence of entire worlds—he consumes it all until nothing remains."

Misora's eyes widened as she struggled to process his words.

"How can you stop something like that?"

Tomo looked to the horizon where Jakuu had vanished, his jaw tightening.

“You can’t ...”

Misora and Otosan sat in silence, their chairs pulled close to Okasan’s bedside. Hours had passed in stillness, as if movement would somehow prolong the mother’s coma.

“When will she wake up?” Misora asked softly.

“There’s no way to know,” Otosan whispered, echoing what the doctor had said.

“What does that mean?” she pressed.

“It means ... she might never wake up,” he said, his voice heavy with sorrow.

Anger flared in Misora’s chest. She rose from her chair, and her grief spilled over into fury. She blamed him for everything—for not teaching her how to swim, for being helpless during the accident, and finally, worst of all, for Okasan’s lifeless state. Her words lashed out, sharp and biting, until there was nothing left to say. She stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

Otosan sat in the quiet that followed, letting her words linger and cut through him like knives to the heart. He didn’t see how he could disagree with Misora.

Suddenly, an invisible force grabbed him by the waist and hurled him across the room. He crashed through the wall like a cannonball, only to find himself submerged in water.

He was back at the accident. The boat was sinking, and Okasan was entangled in the ropes of the sails. Otosan clawed at the knots, desperate to free her, but she shook her head

and pointed behind him. Turning around, he saw Misora floating motionless near the surface. Panic surged through him, but when he turned back to Okasan, the boat had vanished. In their place, two massive, glowing eyes emerged from the deep, followed by gaping jaws. An invisible beast devoured him whole.

Otosan jolted awake in his chair, gasping for air. He was back in the bedroom. The walls were unbroken, and the water was gone. His eyes shifted to Okasan, who remained motionless and unchanged in the bed, her breathing faint but steady.

A burden shared is a mountain halved; a burden kept is a mountain grown. But Otosan felt he had no one with whom to share this burden. And overwhelmed by this fact, he buried his face in his hands and wept in quiet desperation.

Later that day, as night approached, Tomo and Misora sat on the cliff's edge, the ocean stretching out in front of them. Misora sat with her hands clasped tightly in her lap, unable to bring herself to leave. The thought of going home made her chest tighten; she was still remorseful about yelling at her father earlier.

"Do I have to go back?" she asked softly.

Tomo studied her for a moment, then nodded. "You may stay a little longer."

"Thank you," Misora whispered, squinting as she tilted her head to catch the last rays of the evening sun.

“Would you go mad, too, if I stopped coming to see you?” she asked, thinking of the water spirit.

“Tears water the roots of memory, not the weeds of madness.” Tomo paused, and his tone shifted. “But parts of me would become like a tree with severed roots, slowly withering from within.” His voice cracked on the last word, as though the truth of it had finally caught up to him.

Misora gave Tomo a serious look. “Then I’ll keep coming back. No matter what it takes, I’ll find a way,” she said firmly, her voice carrying the matter-of-fact tone her father had often used on her.

Tomo’s gaze softened, and he nodded, accepting her promise.

Then a smile crossed his lips as he pointed to the clear blue sky.

“We can’t see them now, but the sky is filled with sleeping giants,” he said.

He explained how the stars weren’t just flickering pebbles scattered across the fabric of space, but in fact, the suns and moons of sleeping giants spread across the heavens.

“When my time comes,” he continued, “my sun will carry me to the edge of the universe. There, I’ll join thousands of other giants in an endless sleep. And those who remain on earth can look at the stars and remember me.”

Realizing this was what Tomo had meant when he spoke of meeting her in his final dream, Misora thought it sounded so peaceful, so beautiful, a quiet ending among the stars. If one had to leave, she decided, there could be no better way to go.

Then, a distant cackle broke through the air, and despair crept back into their hearts. They knew all too well what was about to come.

Moments later, Jakuu crashed into the ground, grunting as he struggled to rise. Lava dripped from cracks in his skin and mouth, making him even more terrifying. Although he was slower, he had grown in size and strength. Facing Tomo, he roared and charged. They clashed, Tomo's feet sinking into the ground as Jakuu snarled into his ear.

"I will swallow your cities, your mountains, and your seas. When there is nothing left, I'll swallow the light!"

"I'll break your teeth first!" Tomo growled defiantly.

"And yet, here I stand—teeth intact," Jakuu smiled mockingly.

The world-eater wrapped his large teeth around Tomo's shoulder and tossed him aside.

A cruel grin spread across his face. "Do you hear that silence? It's the absence of your kind. And soon, it'll be the absence of you. Give up, and perhaps I'll make your end a little less ... pathetic."

The words struck deep, but they ignited something in Misora. She ran to the edge of the cliff, glancing back to meet Tomo's eyes. In that moment, he saw her intent, and despair flashed across his face.

He wanted to stop her, but it was too late. Misora faced the horizon and jumped.

“Misora, no!” Tomo called out desperately.

Jakuu’s molten eyes narrowed, a sly grin curling his lips as he gazed at the empty horizon.

“Oh, how noble she was, wasn’t she? Hurling herself into the abyss, in a pitiful surrender.”

Jakuu fixed his gaze on Tomo lying on the ground.

“You should have followed her, you know. Leapt into the void with whatever shred of dignity you had left. But no, you stayed. And now—”

Jakuu inhaled deeply, smoke curling from his nostrils.

“This ... is where it ends,” he said, dropping his voice into a low, menacing purr.

Just as the end seemed certain, heavy rain began to pour down on them. Moments later, a massive wave surged over the two titans, crashing down on them with relentless force. Jakuu’s body stiffened as the lava within him solidified.

Tomo watched, mystified, as the ocean itself seemed to rise, taking shape until a colossal watery figure loomed at the shoreline.

Then, through the misty rain, he saw something he had thought he would never see again. In the distance, a figure emerged. It was Yuna.

They embraced each other, resting their foreheads together.

“The girl? What happened to the little girl?” he asked urgently.

Yuna's voice was heavy with grief as she explained. Misora had appeared near the drowned moon, where Nami had seen her and pleaded to let her in. Misora had anticipated this and revealed everything, how she needed their help to save Tomo. But letting her inside had weakened the enchantment that bound the moon as a prison.

The spell crumbled, and moments later, the moon shattered. Waves crashed in, pulling Misora away with the current. The waters were so fierce that even Nami couldn't reach her in time.

"We lost her," Yuna said softly.

Tomo's heart sank. He scanned the mist behind Yuna, hoping Misora might still emerge. But his gaze instead fell on Nami, who was clutching the moon. Its surface was riddled with fractures, eerily resembling the cracks on Jakuu's hardened skin, something broken, yet pieced back together.

A sharp sound of cracking echoed behind Tomo, grabbing his attention. He turned to see the frozen Jakuu beginning to break apart. The world-eater flexed his limbs, joints popping as he regained movement.

Tomo exhaled heavily and glanced at Yuna, and her despair mirrored his own.

With a deep, reluctant sigh, he picked up his weapon and readied himself.

Once more, Tomo swung his massive sword, each strike ringing like thunder against Jakuu's stone skin. Jakuu countered with

crushing force, his fists smashing into Tomo's body, sending shock waves through the air. Yuna leapt in to help, but Jakuu tossed her aside just as easily as he had done with Tomo.

Even Nami tried hurling water at the world-eater, but the fire within him had grown, so the water turned to steam. Mighty as they were, the giants were not enough to stop the world-eater.

Tomo found the last strength he had, and with all he had left, he sent what would be his final blow. He roared defiantly as the sword splintered into shards, leaving him defenceless.

Tomo dropped his arms in defeat and faced the ocean where Misora had once sailed with her family. This was it. No more time, no more chances.

Jakuu saw his victory was certain, and he slowly approached Tomo, his stone face cracking with a menacing grin as he taunted Tomo.

“Your fate was sealed the moment you stood against me.”

Suddenly, a deafening roar split the sky, freezing them both in place. From the clouds descended a dragon, its scales shimmering like molten gold and its wings large enough to block the sun.

The dragon dived in between Tomo and Jakuu, forcing space between the two juggernauts.

Then, it glared at the world-eater before soaring towards the sun.

“Oh good, more giants ...” Jakuu murmured sarcastically.

With a sudden and fearsome roar, the dragon swallowed the sun, and darkness poured out across the land. Even Jakuu stood frozen among the giants, as they adjusted to the night.

“Well, I’m trembling. Another genius scheme, I presume,” Jakuu hissed arrogantly.

Silence fell between the titans, caught between expectation and bewilderment, waiting for what would come next.

Suddenly and slowly, the moon revealed itself, its gentle radiance spreading like silk and brushing away the harshest shadows of the darkness. The giants stood scanning the seas, searching for the familiar presence of Nami. But he was nowhere to be found. Then, as their eyes turned skywards, they saw it—he had entered the moon, leaving waves shimmering faintly within the moon’s glow.

“Thank you,” Yuna whispered softly, knowing it was the only thing Nami could do to help.

Then, the dragon reappeared, spitting fire in a circle that surrounded Jakuu, as a warning.

“Is that all you have? A few flickers of flame?” Jakuu snarled, annoyed.

The dragon showed it was not making empty threats and turned its fire on the world-eater.

Jakuu bellowed, as an inferno engulfed him, cracks glowing red-hot across his body.

With a defiant roar, Jakuu launched himself into the air, colliding with the dragon in a brief but brutal clash. His sharp talons scraped against scales, as fire spread across the sky.

“Your little mutiny is tiresome,” Jakuu spat, shoving the dragon aside. “Do us both a favour and stay out of my way until I decide if you’re worth dealing with.”

His eyes burned with rage as he turned around to retreat, flames still flickering across his wounded form.

“When I return, you’ll see what true firepower looks like!” his voice thundered in one last threat.

This time, no cackle followed him, as all signs of the world-eater vanished in the night sky.

The dragon descended, and it landed heavily on the scorched earth, its claws digging into the charred ground. Tomo and Yuna cautiously kept their distance.

“Is it ... you ...?” Tomo whispered, looking to catch the eye of the dragon.

The dragon lowered its head slightly, and a low, rumbling growl echoed from deep within its chest; not a threat, but the sound of acknowledgement.

“It is!” Tomo exulted and ran to the dragon and embraced it.

The creature gently coiled its long neck around him, and words became unnecessary.

The three of them stood in silence, the weight of their new reality settling around them. Tomo broke the stillness, his deep voice tinged with awe and uncertainty.

“So ... you really are a dragon?”

Misora tilted her head, her sharp, luminous eyes glinting with a mischievous gleam. Unable to speak any more, she rumbled a low, resonant, and unspoken “Yes.”

“What happens now?”

In response, Misora growled at the moon. A deep, familiar sound, like a large dog being scratched behind the ears. She spread her massive wings and leapt into the sky, as Nami poured himself back into the ocean.

Circling the now-empty sphere, Misora unleashed a torrent of fire from her jaws, filling it with a flame that seemed to burn endlessly, bathing the cliff-side in golden light.

Tomo and Yuna exchanged glances, understanding the truth: Misora had become the sun’s stoker, and Nami the caretaker of both the sphere and Misora.

When Misora returned, landing gracefully on the cliff, Nami appeared behind her.

“Take good care of her,” Tomo asked, his voice thick with sorrow.

The water spirit nodded in solemn acceptance of the duty entrusted to him.

Misora leaned into Tomo, their foreheads pressing together in a silent farewell.

“It’s not fair ...” Tomo muttered, his voice breaking.

Misora rumbled softly, her tender, yet resolute gaze making Tomo chuckle as he remembered that she had once spoken these very words.

“Is it over?” a familiar voice asked.

When Tomo turned to answer, Yuna was gone. Instead, Okasan stood in her place. And despite the weariness evident in her eyes, she stood with a supportive presence. Otosan glanced

down, and his hand gripped the shattered remains of a wooden katana, splinters scattered near an old and weathered rock.

“I don’t know,” he whispered, as the truth of it all flooded his heart.

Misora hadn’t survived the accident, and Ootosan had, in some sense, gone mad trying to cope with it.

Okasan’s coma had been real enough, but when she awoke, she found her husband mumbling to himself, clutching the torn book from the market. At times, he would disappear, only to be found wandering aimlessly, speaking to someone who wasn’t there.

She pulled the grief-stricken husband into her arms, not saying a word. Because she knew words may fail the grieving, but an embrace never does.

Years had passed since the accident, leaving behind only faint reminders—a tiny scar on Okasan’s forehead and a slight limp in Ootosan’s walk. Though they missed Misora deeply, they had tried to move forward, filling their days with work and small joys. Yet the house had settled into a quiet rhythm of soft footsteps, the clink of teacups, and the rustle of turning pages. These small, ordinary sounds only seemed to magnify the emptiness Misora had left behind.

But on this day, Ootosan walked into the bright preschool classroom, carrying a box of science tools and diagrams. Determined to spark wonder in the children where Okasan taught, he began explaining the mysteries of molecules and

atoms. However, the glazed expressions on the faces told him he was losing their interest. With a sigh, he set the box aside and glanced at Okasan, ready to accept defeat.

Just then, a story surfaced in his mind.

“Would you like to hear about Misora, the girl who became a dragon?” he asked, his voice filled with the promise of adventure and wonder.

The room became still, and the children leaned forward, their eyes wide with anticipation.

Taking their silence as acceptance, he began to tell them the story of Misora, a kind but shy girl who befriended a giant. Together, they faced the relentless world-eater, an impossible foe known as Jakuu.

Otosan’s voice grew animated as he described Misora’s transformation into a dragon; the thunderous battles and the moments of bravery and sacrifice. His hands gestured wildly, painting vivid images of Jakuu’s shadow looming over the world and Misora’s roar echoing through the heavens.

The children hung on every word, their gasps and murmurs feeding his energy.

But as the story drew closer to its end, his words slowed. The fire in his voice dimmed, replaced by a quiet heaviness. He couldn’t help but see his daughter in every act of courage, every moment of kindness he described. The dragon in his story was no longer a distant character, it was Misora. His Misora. Though he finished the tale with a smile, his voice carried a weight the children didn’t fully understand. A weight only a father could know.

Daughters might leave this earth, but they never leave their fathers’ hearts.