



What Calms Dragon Fire?

“Oh, bother,” said the Curious Explorer, lifting his head from his cozy cave nest. He had tucked his silver-blue wings around himself, arranged his mossy pillow twice, and set his smooth bedtime stone beneath one claw. Now he tried to make one small, sleepy sigh. But his warm breath rushed out far too quickly. POOF! It became a whirl of pearly steam that spun around the cave, rattled a row of pebble cups, and made the painted map on his wall flap like a frightened bird.

The Curious Explorer was a dragon who loved finding things: secret tunnels, shiny beetle shells, lost buttons from travelling coats. Tomorrow he meant to begin a new explorer’s notebook, with clean pages for the lessons and discoveries ahead. But first he wanted something even more important. He wanted to settle down and fall asleep without his dragon fire, which was really warm mist, puffing and whirling everywhere. “A proper explorer must be able to find his way into sleep,” he told himself.



He pressed his snout into the nest and tried again. “Tiny breath,” he whispered. He held his breath so tightly that his ears twitched. Then it escaped in a great hurry. Fwoosh! Steam looped above him, bumped softly against the ceiling, and rolled down in cool, tickly ribbons. The cave was not hurt, and neither was the Curious Explorer, but it was impossible to sleep while his own breath kept playing chase with itself.







On the shelf beside his nest stood the smooth bedtime stone. It was round, warm brown, and marked with one pale gold line that curled from top to bottom. The Curious Explorer had found it beside a quiet pond months ago. When he held it, its polished weight made his claws feel less fidgety. He tucked it carefully into the small pouch woven into the side of his nest. “You are coming,” he said. “I may need an exploring tool.”







A pale glimmer shone through the steam by the cave entrance. It was not sharp like a spark. It floated, bobbed, and waited. The Curious Explorer padded closer, placing each broad paw between the puddles of mist. There, hanging from a low stone arch, was a moon-moth lantern: a tiny lantern of milky glass, carried beneath the wings of a plump moon-moth. Her wings were cream-coloured, dusted with silver circles, and her calm eyes reflected the cave's golden glow.

“Good evening, Curious Explorer,” said the moon-moth. Her voice was as soft as a page being turned. “Your cave has sent little clouds out into the valley all evening. I thought perhaps it was asking for help.” The dragon lowered his head politely. “I am trying to sleep,” he said, “but my breath keeps rushing ahead of me. It makes steam, and then the steam makes everything too busy.”



The moon-moth circled once above his nose. Her lantern painted a gentle path across the cave floor. “Warmth is not the trouble,” she said. “Warmth can be very good company at bedtime. It is the hurry that stirs it up.” From beneath one wing she drew a cloud-shaped riddle card, cut from thick blue paper. She set it on a flat stone where the lantern light could reach it.







The Curious Explorer read the card aloud. “I am made when warmth goes slow. I travel though I have no feet. I pass above the hills, yet never need wings. What am I?” He looked at the card’s puffy cloud edges. Then he looked at the little wisps of steam slipping from his nostrils. “A cloud,” he guessed. “A quiet cloud.” The moon-moth’s antennae lifted happily. “Exactly. But a riddle is only a door. You must walk through it.”

She led him outside into the quiet moonlit valley. The cave opened onto a slope of velvet grass, where round night-flowers had folded their petals and pale stones made a path to a stream. The Curious Explorer kept the bedtime stone in his pouch. Above, the moon was a bright curved bowl, and one real cloud drifted slowly past it. The dragon watched it for a moment. It did not push. It did not race. It simply went.



“Try sending your warmth toward that tall rock,” said the moon-moth, pointing her lantern at a smooth pillar near the stream. The Curious Explorer filled his chest. He meant to be careful. Yet he wanted to do it correctly at once, so he puffed too eagerly. A thick burst of steam flew out, wrapped the rock in a scarf of mist, and then curled back around his own face. He sneezed three tiny golden sparks that vanished before they touched the grass.

“That was nearly a cloud,” said the moon-moth kindly. “But you pushed it as if you were sending a boat downstream with a shove.” The Curious Explorer sat down, embarrassed. His tail drew a line in the grass. “I am good at going quickly,” he admitted. “I find tunnels quickly. I count maps quickly. When I want sleep, I want it quickly too.” He looked toward his cave, where a ribbon of steam still floated out of the entrance.



The moon-moth settled her lantern on the tall rock. “Put one claw on your stone,” she said. “Feel its gold line. Let your breath follow that line, from top to bottom, slowly enough for the lantern flame to stay still.” The Curious Explorer drew out the bedtime stone. Its cool-smooth surface rested under his claw, and his eyes followed the curling gold mark. He breathed in through his nose, counting silently to three.

Then he breathed out. At first, only a thread of warm mist appeared. It slid over the grass instead of leaping. The moon-moth lantern did not flicker. The thread stretched, loosened, and gathered into a small cloud the size of his head. It drifted toward the tall rock, touched it, and slipped peacefully around the other side. The Curious Explorer’s chest rose with delight. “It listened to me,” he whispered.





But from the cave came a soft, busy clatter. The earlier steam had gathered beneath the roof in one great silvery swirl. Each time it bumped the ceiling, a pebble cup chimed. The Curious Explorer hurried to the entrance, then stopped. He could rush inside and blow hard to chase the swirl away. That was what he wanted to do. Yet he remembered the cloud that had travelled without feet, and the lantern flame that had stayed still.



“The cave will settle if you settle it,”  
the moon-moth said from his shoulder.  
“Not by fighting the steam. Show it the way home.”  
The Curious Explorer looked at his nest, half-hidden  
behind the swirling mist. He saw his mossy pillow,  
his map, and the open place waiting for him. He  
wanted to sleep there more than he wanted to be  
quick. So he placed the bedtime stone at the cave  
entrance, just where its pale gold line  
pointed inward.

The dragon stood very still. He let his wings rest  
against his sides. He breathed in, not too much. One,  
two, three. Then he breathed out along the gold line.  
Warm mist flowed from his snout in a long, gentle  
stream. It did not crash into the old steam. It slipped  
beneath it, rose slowly, and made a calm path  
toward the little roof vent above the nest. The silver  
swirl trembled, as if it had been waiting  
for directions.



Again the Curious Explorer breathed in. Again he breathed out, slow as the cloud crossing the moon. This time the swirling steam loosened into long ribbons. They followed his warm cloud path upward, one after another, and floated out through the roof vent into the moonlit valley. Nothing banged. No cups chimed. Even the painted map stopped fluttering. The largest ribbon paused above his head, curled into a soft round shape, and drifted away like a sleepy sheep.



The cave became clear enough for the Curious Explorer to see every familiar thing: the pebble cups in their row, the explorer's notebook waiting on its shelf, the fern-patterned walls, and his cozy cave nest. He had done it. Not by holding his warmth inside, and not by sending it away in a hurry, but by giving it a slow road to travel. He picked up the bedtime stone and pressed it gratefully to his chest.

The moon-moth lifted her lantern, and its warm golden light spread across the nest. "Thank you," said the Curious Explorer. "For the riddle, and for not minding that I did not understand at first." The moon-moth folded her silver-dotted wings. "Explorers are allowed to take a path twice," she replied. "Especially when the second time is gentler." She tucked the cloud-shaped riddle card beside his notebook, where he could find it again.





The Curious Explorer climbed into his nest. He pulled the mossy pillow beneath his chin and tucked his wings around his sides. Beyond the cave entrance, the moon-moth lantern made one small circle of light, then floated toward the valley flowers. Inside, the golden glow remained, soft on the ceiling stones. The dragon put one claw on his smooth bedtime stone and followed its curling line with his eyes.

In through his nose, slow and easy. Out through his mouth, warm and quiet. A little cloud drifted above him, no bigger than a mitten, and slipped through the roof vent without waking a single pebble cup. The Curious Explorer smiled with his eyes nearly closed. Tomorrow there would be notebook pages, paths to follow, and things to discover. Tonight he had found the secret way into sleep. Beneath the soft golden light, his breathing grew slow as a cloud, and he slept.





Good night.



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## After the story



### THE MAIN IDEA

A small, thoughtful step can make a difficult moment feel safer.

### TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

After reading, ask which moment felt the warmest or bravest today.

### AND TOMORROW...

On the next clear evening, the Curious Explorer may use his new quiet-cloud breath to explore a moonlit path drawn across the valley.





## What Calms Dragon Fire?

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When a young dragon's bedtime breath turns his cave into a whirl of pearly steam, a gentle moon-moth helps him discover that warmth does not need to hurry. With a smooth stone and a slow new path for his mist, he finds his own secret way into sleep.

14 minutes of reading

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