

The Boy and the Dragonflies



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Çınar BİBER



Miles loved the wetland near his home. Every morning, he packed his sketchbook and pencils into his canvas satchel. He wore his green t-shirt with the little dragonfly print and his red sneakers. Then he raced down the path to watch the dragonflies dance over the water. They zipped and dipped, shining like tiny jewels in the sun.



Grandma Ruth often came with him. She wore her blue cardigan and woven sun hat, and she leaned on her walking stick. 'Dragonflies are the jewels of the wetland,' she said, her hazel eyes twinkling behind her round glasses. 'They start life in the water, you know.' Miles opened his sketchbook, curious. He wanted to learn everything about these flying wonders.



One morning, a bright blue dragonfly landed right on Miles's sketchbook. It had a tiny red dot on its tail, like a little badge. 'Hello,' Miles whispered. The dragonfly tilted its big compound eyes and seemed to smile. Miles named it Pip. Pip darted ahead, then waited, as if saying, 'Follow me!' Miles grinned and followed.



Pip led Miles to the edge of the pond. There, among the reeds, tiny eggs floated like specks of dust. 'Those are dragonfly eggs,' Grandma Ruth said softly. 'They will hatch into nymphs.' Miles drew the eggs carefully. He wrote, 'Dragonfly babies start as tiny eggs in the water.' His pencil flew across the page.



Pip flew low over the water, and Miles saw a strange little creature crawling up a reed. It looked like a small, wingless bug. 'That's a nymph,' Grandma Ruth explained. 'It lives underwater and eats tiny insects.' Miles sketched the nymph, adding a note: 'Nymphs breathe underwater and hide from fish.' He was learning so much!



Days passed, and Miles visited the wetland every morning. He watched the nymphs grow bigger and bigger. Then one day, Pip led him to a reed where a nymph was climbing out of the water. 'Watch closely,' Grandma Ruth whispered. The nymph's skin split open, and a brand-new dragonfly crawled out. Miles held his breath.



The new dragonfly rested on the reed while its wings dried in the sun. Slowly, they spread out, shimmering and clear. 'It's beautiful!' Miles gasped. He drew the moment in his sketchbook: the split skin, the crumpled wings, the shiny new body. He wrote, 'Dragonflies change from water bugs to flying jewels.'



Pip zipped around Miles's head, proud and happy. Miles laughed and tried to follow, but Pip was too fast. 'You're a great guide, Pip,' Miles said. 'But I want to be a guide too.' He looked at his sketchbook. It was full of drawings and notes. 'I could make a picture guide for everyone,' he said. Grandma Ruth smiled.



Miles worked on his guide every afternoon. He drew the eggs, the nymphs, and the flying adults. He added bright colors and arrows to show the life cycle. 'The wetland is their home,' he wrote. 'We must keep the water clean.' Grandma Ruth helped him spell tricky words like 'nymph' and 'life cycle.'



One day, the Wetland Warden came by. She wore an olive-green uniform and a wide-brimmed hat. 'That's a wonderful guide,' she said, looking at Miles's drawings. 'Would you like to share it with visitors?' Miles nodded eagerly. The warden gave him a clipboard and a badge. 'You're our young dragonfly guide now,' she said with a grin.



Miles stood at the wetland entrance, his guide in his hands. A family stopped to look. 'Did you know dragonflies start life underwater?' Miles asked. He showed them his drawings. 'And we can protect them by keeping the water clean.' The family listened carefully. The warden beamed. Pip zoomed by, as if to say, 'Well done!'



More visitors came to see Miles's guide. He told them about the tiny eggs and the hungry nymphs. He explained how dragonflies need clean water and healthy plants. 'The wetland is a freshwater home for so many creatures,' he said. Grandma Ruth sat on a bench nearby, her walking stick beside her, smiling proudly.



The Wetland Warden asked Miles to make copies of his guide for the visitor center. 'Your drawings teach people why this place matters,' she said. Miles felt warm inside. He added a new page: 'How to Help.' It said, 'Pick up litter. Don't pollute the water. Protect the wetland.' Pip landed on the page, tapping the red dot on its tail.



On the last day of summer, the warden held a special event. Miles stood in front of a crowd and held up his guide. 'Dragonflies are special because they start as water bugs and become flying jewels,' he said. 'But they need our help.' Everyone clapped. Pip flew in a happy loop above Miles's head. Grandma Ruth wiped a happy tear.



Miles kept visiting the wetland with his sketchbook. He drew new dragonflies and added more notes. Sometimes other kids came to help him watch. 'You're a real guide now,' Grandma Ruth said. Miles smiled. He knew that even a small boy with a sketchbook could make a big difference for the wetland and its dragonflies.



And if you ever visit the wetland, look for a boy in a green t-shirt with a sketchbook. He might show you a bright blue dragonfly with a red dot on its tail. He'll tell you about the amazing life cycle and how to protect the water. Because Miles, the young dragonfly guide, knows that every little creature deserves a clean, safe home.