

-- The legend of the Dragon Heart

There was really nothing which set young Hector apart from the other young dragons. He excelled at cloud tag and legend song, but had little interest in tail wrestling or treasure management. His nest sisters were very beautiful and his younger brother seemed destined to be Lore Master one day, but Hector simply coasted along, not really concerned about his future.

One lazy afternoon he was napping by a stream when a sound awakened him. He followed his ears across the stream and came upon the prettiest silver dragonet he had ever seen. She was snuffling quietly and from her large, clear eyes flowed the purple tears of true sadness. Bending low, Hector asked her what was wrong.

"I am Shupri," she replied, "youngest nestling of Wyreah, King of all Dragons. My bond mate, a captain in our royal guard, was captured this morning when he sought to save a foolish hatchling from a group of men. Now he lies in the hands of our bitterest enemy and they will surely slay him. If only I could tell him how much he means to me, how much I care. If only..." Her eyes began to glow with the red flame of her life force and her voice rang with song of old magic. The flame and song rose and mixed until Hector was forced to look away.

The sound and light ended in a silent flash and Hector heard a soft sigh. He turned to see Shupri lying before him. Her skin had faded to gray and her eyes were barely open. Hector rushed toward her but her soft voice, barely a whisper, stopped him. "You must help me. Deliver my message to my beloved, before it is too late. Time is short and the old magic has left me very weak. Please help me. Please..." As her voice faded there rose from her still form something out of legend. It pulsed with her life force and glowed with her love. It was all that was strong and pure and good within her. It was the soul of Shupri. It was her dragon Heart.

Hector glanced down at the young dragon maid, her color darkening by the moment. He glanced up at the glowing message Shupri had created. With a firm look and a trembling hand he made his decision, leaping into the sky to grasp the dragon Heart. With contact he could feel Shupri's strength and courage. He knew he had to save her and he thought he knew how. Of all the legend songs, the old ones were his favorites and they hinted of a powerful magic, created by the exchange of true love between two dragons and symbolized by the dragon Heart. The songs were very old and their original meaning had faded but Hector felt the only chance for Shupri was for him to deliver her message to her beloved captain. He wasn't sure where the captain was, but the Heart seemed to know.

Skimming the clouds, Hector raced away from the dragon lands, following the pulsing call of the Heart he carried. It seemed like a long time later when, in a clearing, he saw a handsome bronze dragon bound by metal and surrounded by men. The men danced and cried out, waving pointed sticks and heavy stones in the air. The gleaming bronze skin bled from many wounds and Hector knew there was no time for planning. Holding the heart close, he dove toward the bronze captive, straight through the angry group of men.

When they saw him, the men shouted even louder and turned their sticks and stones upon him. Hector played this deadly game of tag better than he ever had but there were so many and he could not dodge them all. Bleeding from scores of wounds Hector strove on, refusing to give up until he was next to the bronze captain. As he placed the glowing dragon Heart into the hands of the captive dragon Hector whispered, "Shupri ..." and fell into a dream.

In his dream he saw the dragon Heart glow brighter, as it touched its intended. He saw the bonds fall away and the shouting men fall silent and still. Their rocks and sticks fell forgotten from their hands as they bathed in the light of the love of Shupri. Then he saw the bronze captain gently pick up a horribly wounded young dragon and fly swiftly to where Shupri lay. Kneeling beside the still form of the dragon maid, the captain sang his own song of love and commitment and offered all that he was to his beloved. The glowing, pulsing light of two dragon Hearts enveloped all three forms, making them whole and well and stronger than before. As the glow faded, Hector smiled as he felt himself...

"Wake up, Hector, please oh please wake up!" It was Shupri's voice and the first thing Hector saw when he opened his eyes was her beautiful silver face, eyes brimming with the blue tears of true joy.

Hector was knighted by Wyreah, King of all Dragons, and made the official courier to the royal house. He traveled far and wide and had many adventures but he always returned home. Eventually he found his own true love and they worked their own magic.

Never again was any dragon troubled by any man. The light of the dragon Heart had opened their eyes and they no longer felt joy at causing pain to others.