

Norberta's Way Home  
(Based on Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling)

By: Lia Castro

My story began the way most dragons' stories start: inside of my egg. I was warm and safe, ignorant of the world outside of my shell, but I was content. I thought nothing would change that. But I was wrong. In one seemingly random moment, my muted, tiny world intensified. It was like living underwater forever and then being shoved up through the surface for the first time. I became aware of sounds and scents outside of my shell. Every small detail of my world grew. While I was still getting acquainted with my enhanced senses, I felt something stirring inside of me. It commanded my jet black claws and wings. Suddenly, the walls of refuge that I had depended on for so long crumbled (along with my First Theory of the Universe) and I saw the real world for the first time.

Tumbling on to a hard surface, I looked around. I was in some kind of house. *Is this the whole world?* I wondered. Then I saw four pairs of eyes looking down at me. Somehow I knew they were humans. One human had a giant furry face and warm black eyes. I called him Furry. The next human had interesting green eyes, unruly black hair, and a lightning bolt-shaped scar, so I called him Lightning. The third human had flaming red hair, so I named him Fireball. The fourth human had fluffy brown hair, and I thought she looked kind of inquisitive, so I titled her Curious. Lightning, Fireball, and Curious stood together, so I called them the Trio. Then I sneezed a few sparks. Furry made some sounds at me and stroked my scales. Just to see if I could trust him, I nipped his fingers. He seemed rather delighted. I decided I could rely on Furry.

Then I noticed an unmistakably human face peeking through a window in the house. Suddenly the mood of my surroundings changed from interested to worried. The four humans chatted with each other, and even though I had no idea what they were saying, I could tell they were concerned. In one swish of my tail, my Second Theory of the Universe went out the door with the Trio as they strolled out into a world that seemed to keep expanding.

In the days that followed, I started to depend on Furry. He made a delicious mixture that filled me up and gave me energy. I was learning to control my clumsy limbs and soon I could run and jump without stumbling. There was one sound Furry repeated to me. It sounded like "norbert". Soon I wondered if that was what he had named me. I wasn't sure if it was perfect for me, but I trusted Furry's judgement. The Trio visited often. Another week passed and I started eating solid food that tasted even better than the liquid stuff. Sometimes the Trio came to feed me. I even bit Fireball once! Life was great.

I should have learned by then that nothing lasts forever. The Trio was visiting when they told Furry something important. I didn't know what it was, only that it made Furry extremely upset. A few days later, Furry placed me inside a box with good food and a scrap of fluff (the fluff was fun to rip). After the sun had set, I heard footsteps coming. I saw the Trio. They

picked up my box and carried me away from Furry. I was leaving. What would I do without Furry? As we left Furry's house, I noticed we were wrapped in a cloak. Then I saw the giant building we approached. It was a colossal stone structure. We walked through the gigantic double doors and strolled through the winding hallways. Everything about this place was unfamiliar. The four of us came to a staircase. We climbed until there were no more stairs to climb.

Lightning pulled the cloak off of us. He handed me to some friendly-looking people sitting on broomsticks. Once my box was strapped in, the people flew away and I watched the world I knew grow distant. As we flew over a field, one person said, "I think she's a girl. How about we call her Norberta instead of Norbert?" I didn't understand their words, but I recognized my name. The person said it differently. *Norberta sounds perfect*, I mused. I wasn't afraid of all these changes anymore, so why not? *I'm Norberta now*, I thought as we flew into the horizon.