

# MAEVE MEETS A LION

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**M**aeve was mad. Really mad. Crazy mad.  
It wasn't the first time either.

Sometimes things just piled up inside of her: the noise in her house, her step- brother's endless teasing, her half-sister's wailing, and her mother's constant demands. It caused a hot fury inside. And it hardly ever went away.

Take today. The day had barely begun, and her step-brother, Seth, had ruined her life's work. Maeve had toiled on her "Month of March" art project all week. She had worked with her best pastel crayons – smooth and vibrant -- and struggled to draw a perfect windy storm, throwing away many crumpled failures. Today's drawing was her personal best.

She was so sure about her project she decided to show it to Seth. He held up the page and stared. Then he snorted, crumpled the sheet

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into a big ball, and shouted: “Stuuuuuuupid! This is the stupidest, silliest thing I have ever seen.”

His shouts woke baby Guinevere, and Mom yelled out: “You two get down here now!”

That did it--Maeve was in trouble, and she was an artistic flop with no project for school. Maeve stomped down the stairs, grumbling, only to hear her mom say, “Where are your shoes and socks? Why isn’t your hair brushed? Get upstairs and get it done!”

Maeve froze in place; her body stiff as steel and her jaw clamped tight. She stomped and sighed her way back up the stairs and slammed her bedroom door. She threw her body around the room in a furious swirl of sobs and stomps, whirling and twirling like a wild March wind. Her toys, and crayons, and books, and papers flew. She opened her mouth to scream and fire came out.

Maeve spun in anger until she was so dizzy she collapsed in a heap on her bedroom floor.

And then, everything was quiet. Too quiet. Something was wrong. She felt scorching heat on her neck and grit beneath her palms. She looked up slowly. Her bed and books and toys were gone, and all around her there was a sea of sand. Blinding white light burned her eyes.

“How ya doin’ baby? Having a bad day? Feeling a bit wild?” said a low, laughing voice.

Maeve knew that voice, and it soothed her like a cool glass of lemonade. The velvet-voice belonged to Grandma Cassandra, her favorite person in the entire world.

Grandma Cassie was soft and strong and kind. She spent most of

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her time sitting on her porch in a rocking chair crafted from twisted twigs and branches. In fact, Grandma Cassie sat in that very rocker right here in the middle of this sandy ocean, rocking away.

“Grandma,” stuttered Maeve, “where are we?”

“We are in Egypt.”

“Egypt!? How? Why?” stammered Maeve in a daze.

“Don’t worry about all that now,” said Cassie in her soothing voice. “You are here so I can tell you the story of a gal who really understood anger. Her name was Sekhmet and she was the daughter of the great Sun God, Ra. Oh look Maeve, here she comes now.”

Just then a cloud of dust formed on the horizon. At first Maeve thought it was a windstorm, but as it got closer a large girl emerged from the cloud and marched by Maeve.

What was this thing called Sekhmet? She had the body of a very large teenage girl, but her head was that of a great roaring lion. She waved her mane wildly while she swung great silver swords with both hands. When she opened her mouth to roar, a huge torch of fire scorched all that crossed her path. Maeve crept close to Grandma Cassie’s rocker to be safe.

“Why is she like that?” Maeve whispered.

“Well,” said Cassie, “she is a goddess, and she was given a lion’s head and those great swords by her father, Ra, who commanded her to swing her sword at anyone in the Kingdom who was unfair, unjust or inconsiderate to Ra. Sekhmet was perfect for the job, because she was made to express pure rage.”

Ah, Maeve nodded to herself, this was a goddess she could really understand. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to swing and slash with

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Sekhmet, to punish wrongdoing, to make everyone obey her will? Just as she thought this, a gust of wind lifted Maeve and Grandma Cassie, carrying them at Sekhmet's side like a magic carpet.

Maeve dug her fingers deep into Sekhmet's mighty mane. Together, they ran like the wind into a village, and Sekhmet terrified two boys who were taunting a little girl. Next Sekhmet swung her sword at a man trying to steal pomegranates from a shopkeeper.

"Are you frightened, little one?" shouted Grandma Cassie over Sekhmet's roar.

Maeve shook her head. No, not afraid at all. In fact, she loved it. She pulled closer to Sekhmet, merging into the burning energy of righteous rage.

But then Sekhmet swung her sword at a group of goats innocently grazing in small pen.

"Wait," Maeve yelled.

Next Sekhmet shot her fiery breath at a group of women harvesting figs.

"No," yelled Maeve. "You're not supposed to destroy everything!"

But Sekhmet would not listen. Her rage was too strong. Sekhmet flew toward a group of village children.

"Sekhmet, stop!" Maeve yelled. "Grandma, we have to do something!"

There was a flash of golden light, and a strange, immense man stood before them. He had a falcon's head, and sunlight seemed to shine all around him. Somehow Maeve knew instantly. This must be Ra.

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“My daughter must be stopped,” he spoke directly to Maeve. “And you will be the one to do it.”

“But how?” trembled Maeve, staring up at the sunlit god.

“Give her these.”

Ra handed Maeve a golden pallet filled with different colored paints and long beautiful paintbrush. Maeve was terrified to speak to Sekhmet. But then she remembered her own rage that very morning. Had she been as scary as Sekhmet? Maeve was filled with a knowing courage.

“Sekhmet,” shouted Maeve through the dust. “Why don’t you put down those heavy swords and try carrying these instead.”

With a mighty growl, Sekhmet let her swords clatter to the ground and she grabbed the pallet and brush. Maeve watched as Sekhmet’s red eyes glowed pink and orange. Her arms kept swinging, but from the brush flowed ribbons of color –red, orange, yellow–the hues of a gorgeous sunset. She painted the sky with her colors, and the stark day turned into a beautiful evening, and a soft, pink glow spread across the desert floor. Then, soothed by warm evening light, the mighty lion-girl linked arms with her falcon father, and the two glided into the glowing sunset.

Maeve and Grandma Cassie float downward and landed back in the warm sand. Cassie smiled a knowing smile. She walked slowly back to her chair and resumed her rocking. “Did you learn something about anger?” she asked.

“I’m not sure,” Maeve confessed.

“Your anger can inspire you to do great deeds. Sometimes it inspires you to action and sometimes to art.”

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“I used to do art, but Seth said my drawings stink.”

Grandma Cassie laughed. “Fiddlesticks. Your drawings are your drawings. Never let anyone get in the way of your joy. If that helps you sort out your feelings, then sit right down and draw. Color your anger and draw your fears and sketch your sadness and before you know it your feelings will be calm and clear.”

Grandma Cassie stroked Maeve’s cheek. “And remember, Maeve, feelings are like the weather. They come and they go. Soon enough the March wind turns into April rain, and April rain to flowers.”

With that Grandma Cassie was gone, and Maeve was back on her bedroom floor. In both hands, she was holding pastels, and a blank sheet of white paper lay in front of her.

Maeve remembered Seth’s mean teasing, and her crayons became Sekhmet’s sword, striking and slashing the page. She heard her mother’s demands and the baby’s cries and her pastels shot out red and orange fire. She spilled her fury onto the page, and then the anger ebbed away, changing into something calm and clear, something blue and grassy green.

Finally she felt complete. Maeve looked at her page with approval. It totally expressed her storm of her rage and rainbow of feelings. She grabbed her new picture and her backpack and ran downstairs to catch the bus. She was full of feelings and full of the knowledge that she knew how to express them. She laughed and threw back her head, letting out a jubilant, booming lion’s roar.