



The Knight and the Dragon

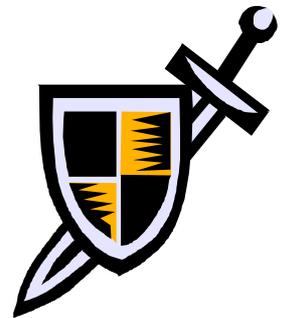
There was once a princess who lived in a palace with her father, the king, and her mother, the queen. Everyone loved the princess because she was kind and had a generous and sweet nature. She was polite to the servants and loving to her parents and could always be heard singing as she walked in the gardens.

At the same time, in another part of the kingdom lived a young boy. He too was courteous and kind and cheerful and children loved to play with him. When he was eleven years old, it was decided he should go to work for a lord who lived in a castle and to train to become a knight.

It was hard work training to be knight. First, he had to serve his master at mealtimes, polish his armour and be prepared to fight by his side when he went to war. The young boy was given silver spurs to wear when he rode his horse, and a sword and shield and many other things besides. And although he was taught to be brave, he was also expected to be gentle, understanding and wise. There were rules for becoming a knight and some of these were:

- To follow your conscience.
- To speak out and tell people what you know to be true.
- To respect the weak and defend them.
- To be loyal.
- To stand up to your enemies.
- To oppose anything that is bad.
- To obey just orders given by those in authority.
- To be truthful, and to keep your word (which means that if you promise to do something you must be sure to do it).
- To be generous and give of yourself.

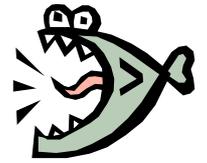
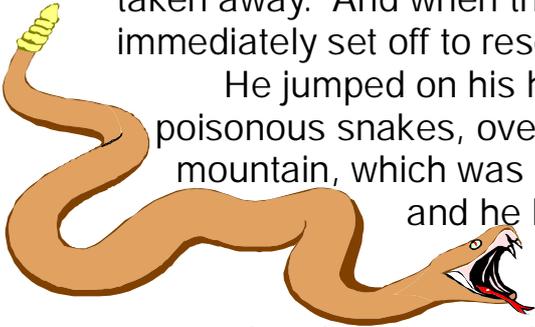
The years passed by and the knight grew up to be a fine young man and his parents were very proud of him. But one day something terrible happened. A dragon, who lived in a gloomy castle beyond the



mountains, kidnapped the princess as she was walking in the palace garden and carried her away. He was lonely as people were afraid of him and didn't come to visit, and when he heard the princess singing in the garden, he thought how nice it would be if she came to live in his castle to cheer him up.

The king and queen were heart-broken when their daughter was taken away. And when the young knight heard what had happened, he immediately set off to rescue her.

He jumped on his horse and galloped through a jungle full of poisonous snakes, over rivers full of man-eating fish, and up a mountain, which was so steep his horse's hooves kept slipping and he had to hold onto its mane otherwise he would have fallen off and rolled down to the rocky valley below.



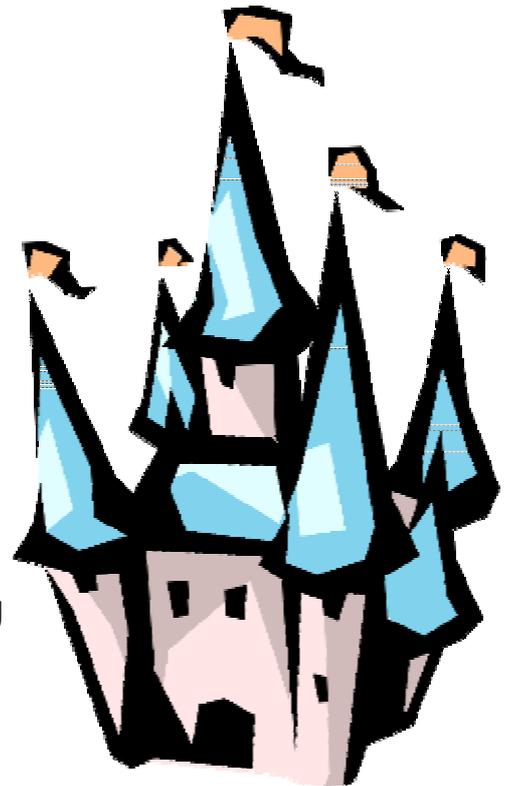
When he came to the high, thick walls of the castle, he didn't know what to do next. How was he going to climb the walls and rescue the princess? He caught a glimpse of her face at a far-up window at the top of a turret and knew he couldn't leave her there.

"I promise I will save you!" he called to her as he banged on the enormous door leading into the castle, but the dragon just blew fire through the keyhole and laughed. Then the young knight climbed a tree and leapt from its topmost branch onto the wall of the castle, but the dragon knocked him off with a flick of his horny tail and the knight landed with a splash in the moat below.

A whole week passed by. The young knight searched every inch of the wall of the castle, trying to find a way in. He was attacked by wild animals, stung by bees, had water poured on him by the dragon from above, and he was very cold and hungry. But he did not give up. He searched the forest for long pieces of vine and dug the earth for long, strong roots and plaited them together with tough, wild grass until he had made a very long rope. He had just finished and was hiding it under his jacket, when the dragon peered over the parapet of the castle and said in a very sad voice:

"The princess has stopped singing!"

The knight looked at the silver spurs fastened to the back of his riding boots and had an idea. He took off the spurs and called out to the dragon, "I have something to show the princess. Made of silver!"



“Let me see!” shouted the dragon, thundering down the stone steps and opening the front door of the castle in a flurry of flames.

The knight bravely stood in front of the dragon, who was looking very cross. He showed the dragon the silver spurs, which shone like stars when he held them up to the light.

“Give them to me!” roared the dragon, spitting bits of fire all over the place.

“I will!” said the knight. “But I have to take them to the princess first, otherwise she might never sing again!”

“Then I shall imprison you too!” said the dragon.

“All right,” said the knight, and the dragon pulled him into the castle, threw him into the turret with the princess, and locked the door.

“I’ll give you five minutes,” said the dragon, “and if the princess doesn’t start singing by then, I won’t give you any supper!”

The knight told the princess not to worry. He planned to use the rope he had made to help them both escape from the castle. He tied one end of the rope to the leg of a table, and then told the princess to hold on to him tightly as they climbed through the window and down the rope to his horse waiting below.

As they rode swiftly home, they could hear the angry roars of the dragon rumbling around the sky when he discovered they had escaped. But then the noise suddenly stopped. The dragon had found the knight’s silver spurs lying side by side on the floor of the turret. The knight had left them as a present for the dragon. The dragon was very touched. No-one had ever given him a present before.

He felt a bit ashamed. He was sorry he had made the princess sad. Then he had a happy idea. There was a beautiful lady dragon who lived in the next kingdom. Perhaps, if he gave her the silver spurs as a token of his love and asked her nicely, she would agree to marry him. She might even wear the spurs as earrings at their wedding!

When the young knight arrived safely back at the castle with the princess, his master praised him for being brave and truthful and kind.

“You have proved yourself to be a true knight,” he said, and gave him a pair of gold spurs to replace the silver ones.

And the princess? Well, she married the knight, of course, and they lived happily ever after.

