

27. The Dreadful Guest



Once upon a time, the King of Russia decided to hold a grand feast. He invited princes, rich merchants, brave warriors and all the important people in his kingdom.

On the night of the feast, the king and his guests sat together at a long table, in the banquet hall. They talked and laughed and everyone was happy.

Suddenly, a huge animal burst into the hall. It was a horrible looking dragon. It was as tall as a tree, as broad as a house, with teeth like spikes and claws like knives. His skin was hard and scaly and his eyes, red. Red, hot flames shot forth from his mouth, and black smoke from his nostrils. Now, this dragon was also a very mean creature. He loved to be a spoilsport and a killjoy. He walked straight to the head of the table and pushed himself between the king and the queen. Everyone stopped talking. Everyone was scared. Well, not everyone. The brave warrior Ivan was not afraid of dragons. “What a rude, impolite creature you are !” he said angrily.



Just then the servants brought in the food and set the platters on the table. But before they had a chance to serve the food to the king and the queen and the guests, the dragon began to gobble up everything. The king and the queen did not know what to do. Nobody could stop the dragon. But Ivan spoke up again, "Nobody has ever taught you any manners, I can see," he said, "I hope you choke on the food you are gobbling up so greedily !"

Now this was more than the dragon could stand. He puffed out fire and sprang to his feet. "I dare you to come out and fight with me, Ivan !" he roared, "Are you ready ?"

"Of course," said Ivan.

"What have you done, Ivan !" said the king. "Let's put up with the dragon for some more time. You cannot fight a dragon. It will burn and kill you in no time."



But Ivan was not afraid. He knew that dragons were dreadful but not intelligent. He was sure he could find a way of killing the dragon.

Everyone walked out to the palace courtyard. The dragon and the brave warrior faced each other. The dragon smiled a very mean and wicked smile. “Now, how shall I kill you, you silly fool ?” he asked Ivan. “Shall I burn you to death ? Shall I smother you with fumes ? Or better still, shall I tear you up with my knife claws ? Or shall I eat you up with my spike teeth ?”

In the meanwhile, however, the clever Ivan had thought of a way of tricking the wicked creature. He folded his arms on his chest and said in a clear voice, “Now, look here, dragon, when you dared me to fight you, I agreed readily. I thought it would be a fight between just the two of us.” Then he pointed behind the dragon. “Why have you brought a whole army to help you fight ?”

The dragon was as stupid as Ivan thought him to be. He turned his head to see what Ivan was pointing at. Quick as a flash of lightning, Ivan drew his sword and cut off the dragon’s head.

“There !” he said, “We won’t have to put up with this dreadful guest ever again !”



Things to do :

1. Guess/Find the meaning of the following words and phrases :
* spoilsport * impolite * platters * gobbling up * sprang.
2. Answer the following questions :
 - (a) Where did this story take place ?
 - (b) Who burst into the banquet hall ?
 - (c) Who was not afraid of dragons ?
 - (d) What did Ivan know about dragons ?
 - (e) In what ways did the dragon threaten to kill Ivan ?
 - (f) How did Ivan kill the dragon ?
3. Match the pairs of words from **A** and **B** with reference to this story.

A	B
(1) rich	(a) people
(2) silly	(b) warriors
(3) important	(c) creature
(4) mean	(d) feast
(5) brave	(e) merchants
(6) grand	(f) fool

4. Write short description of the following :
* The feast * The dragon * Ivan.
5. List all the comparisons you find in the story.
Example : As tall as a tree.
6. Punctuate the following sentences properly :
 - (a) what a rude impolite creature you are
 - (b) are you ready
7. Form groups of five.
Choose a fairy tale/folk tale that you all enjoy.
Narrate it by taking turns.