

## Story 2: Damsel in Distress

Long ago, knights in shining armor battled dragons and rescued damsels in distress on a daily basis. Although it is not often stressed in many stories of chivalry, the rescue often involved logical thinking and creative problem solving by the damsel. Here then is a typical knightly encounter.

Once upon a time, a notorious knight captured a damsel and imprisoned her in a castle surrounded by a square moat that was infested with extraordinarily hungry alligators. The moat was 20 feet across, and no drawbridge existed because after depositing the damsel in the castle, the evil knight had taken it with him (giving his horse one major hernia). After a time, a good knight rode up and said, "Hail, sweet damsel, for I am here, and thou art there. Now what are we going to do?"

The knight, though good, was not too bright and consequently paced back and forth along the moat looking anxiously at the alligators and trying feebly to think of a plan. While doing so, he stumbled upon two sturdy beams of wood suitable for walking across but lacking sufficient length. Alas, the moat was 20 feet across, but the beams were each only 19.5 feet long and 8 inches wide. He tried to stretch them and then tried to think. Neither effort proved successful. He had no nails, screws, saws, superglue, or any other method of joining the two beams to extend their length. What to do? What to do? Fortunately, the damsel, after a suitable time to allow the good knight to attempt to solve the puzzle on his own, called to the knight and gave him a few hints that enabled him to rescue her.

What was the maiden's suggestion?

This story from medieval times foreshadows our journey into the geometric and the visual.