

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Jack. A sickly boy, Jack was often bed-ridden for days on end. Because of this, Jack often spent his days reading. His eyes danced from page to page, cherishing each and every written word.

One day, a mysterious book appeared on Jack's bedside table. This book was quite heavy and in pristine condition. Excited by this new novel, Jack immediately opened the book and began to read.

*Once upon a time, there lived a very brave man. When dragons overran his village, the man fought to defend his town from destruction. For his courage, the queen of the land decided to make the man a knight. All of the townsfolk attended the knighthood ceremony, which was held in the grand ballroom of the queen's castle...*

As Jack continued to read, the room around him began to change. The walls melted away. The floor turned from carpet to polished marble. A sweet aroma lingered in the air. The world of the book came alive, and Jack was in it! What's more, Jack had become the knight!

As Jack knelt before the queen, he could hardly contain his excitement. He had gone from a sickly boy to a courageous knight! All of Jack's ailments disappeared. Once the queen completed the knighting, Jack rose and turned to face a cheering crowd as music began to play. The celebration of Jack's knighting could now commence.

The party was unlike any Jack had seen. The music. The laughter. the food. All for Jack. The queen's orange dress shimmered like koi in a pond. Fireworks lit up the sky in crimson red and vibrant yellow hues. Jack danced with many people that night, free of his ailments. For the first time in a long time, Jack was truly happy.

The following day, Jack was summoned to the queen's throne room. She had a quest for her new knight. Dragons from the south were terrorizing the land. Jack's quest was to travel to the Land of Dragons and slay them all. The journey would be treacherous, but a necessary one. Jack took off on a horse, due south, toward the Land of Dragons.

After three perilous days of travel, Jack made it to the Land of Dragons. The land was bleak, black, and devoid of nearly all life. The soil was rocky, with malnourished vegetation struggling to grow. A mountain was visible in the distance. Atop this mountain was the home of the dragons, where Jack would put an end to the dragons once and for all.

Jack made it to the base of the mountain, where he found the mouth of a cave. The mountain was too steep to climb, so Jack left behind his horse to travel through the cave on foot. Jack entered the cave and followed the path forward. The cave was dark, with the only light coming from holes in the rock. Jack took a step and heard a terrifying crunch. He lifted up his foot to see what he had stepped on. Jack stepped on a human skull. As Jack looked around, he saw human skulls and bones scattering the cave. A half-rotten corpse also lay among the bones, teeming with flies and maggots. Disgusted by the sight, Jack continued his trek.

As Jack ventured deeper into the cave, the number of bones increased. Soon, there were piles of bones lining Jack's path. Jack had never witnessed such destruction. But then, Jack came across something odd. It was a dragon's skull. Jack picked up one of the many dragon skulls that were scattered around the cave. While looking at the dragon skull, Jack noticed something. These skulls were much smaller than

normal dragon skulls. They were baby dragon skulls. Jack put the skull down and continued his journey; proceeding with caution, knowing the dragons must be close. A light appeared at the end of the tunnel. Jack was atop the mountain in the home of the dragons.

To Jack's surprise, the mountaintop was green and lush. An apple tree full of deep red apples stood mere feet from Jack's feet. At the base of the apple tree laid a baby dragon. Jack approached the dragon, which was sound asleep. Jack drew his sword and prepared to strike the dragon. It would be his first kill. But as Jack was about to strike, the baby dragon stirred. It stretched its legs to reveal it had only three. The dragon then began a coughing fit and coughed up blood. Eventually, the dragon turned its gaze up towards Jack. The reflection of Jack's drawn sword was visible in the baby dragon's sea green eyes. This sickly baby dragon did not deserve to die because of the actions of other dragons. So Jack tossed his sword into the bushes and continued forward with a new goal in mind: make peace, not war, with the dragons.

With his heart beating out of his chest, Jack approached the massive dragons sunbathing on a cliff edge. The dragons were ready to tear him limb from limb. The dragons explained that the humans burned and salted all of their land many years ago in a battle that killed many dragons, including some babies. To the surprise of the dragons, Jack offered them peace. After some deliberation, the dragons agreed to Jack's offer of peace. Jack hopped on the back of a dragon, which flew him back to the castle at breakneck speed.

Astounded by her knight's bravery and courage, the queen agreed to make peace with the dragons. At last, there would be peace between the humans and the dragons. No longer would there be bloodshed. The queen threw another party, to which both humans and dragons were invited. Crimson red and vibrant yellow fireworks once again lit the sky, and the humans and dragons lived happily ever after.

#### Author's Note

#### Hero's Journey

Ordinary World – A bed-ridden Jack picks up a book and begins to read.

Call to Adventure – Jack is transported into the book world and is eventually asked by the queen to travel to the Land of Dragons and slay all those who live there.

Meeting of the Mentor – Receiving a quest from the queen.

Crossing the Threshold – Jack leaves the castle towards the Land of Dragons on horseback.

Test, Allies, Enemies – Jack enters the cave at the mountain and walks over some bones.

Approach To The Innermost Cave – Jack literally ventures deeper into the cave and finds even more bones and prepares to slay the dragons he finds.

Ordeal – Jack sees the baby dragon with three legs and prepares to kill it, but realizes he shouldn't, so he decides to make peace. He drops his sword and walks up to the dragons without any weapons.

Reward – Jack is able to broker peace with the dragons.

The Road Back – Jack returns to the queen on the back of a dragon.

Return With the Elixir – The queen accepts the peace deal and a party is thrown.

Reversal – My reversal occurs when Jack decides not to kill the baby dragon that he finds sleeping under a tree. I tried to build up the fact that the dragons were the bad guys, but once Jack actually meets a real dragon, he realizes that the dragons might not be as evil as they are portrayed.

Planting – At the beginning of the story, I mention how Jack is a very sickly boy. I use this fact later when Jack confronts the baby dragon near the end of the story. I did this in order to give Jack a justification for not killing the dragon, because Jack remembers how weak he is in the 'real world'.

Doubles – Jack and the baby dragon are doubles of each other. Jack is bed-ridden in the 'real world', while the baby dragon is missing a leg. Both of these characters have physical ailments/disabilities. Additionally, these both characters are young, with Jack being a young boy and the baby dragon being a baby.

Motif – While Jack travels through the cave, he encounters many piles of bones. He notices that there are both human bones and dragon bones in the cave. While the bones are slightly different, they are all still the bones of dead creatures that died in a brutal war many years ago. The use of the bones is supposed to highlight the fact that while people may look different on the outside, on the inside, we are all made up of the same bones. This idea is visible in Jack's decision not to kill the baby dragon. He realizes that he is just like the baby dragon: hurt and struggling to survive despite his ailments holding him back. Killing the baby dragon would be similar to killing himself. Jack then decides that peace is a much better option than war.