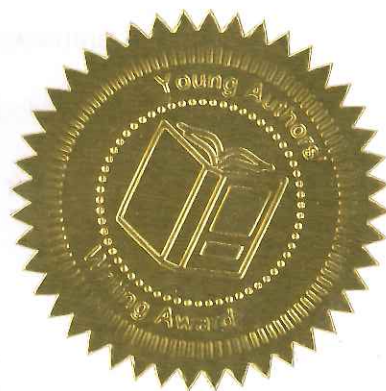


The Dragon

By Gabriella Saracco



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This story is dedicated to Madeline
Leja, Dragon Girl. She is the bravest
person I know.

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The dragon was back.

It was staring at me, a malicious gleam in its fiery red and yellow eyes. With a flick of its sand-colored tail, the beast smashed a stalagmite on the floor of the cave. It was a threatening movement, as if the dragon was trying to show how powerful it was.

I backed away but hit the wall of the cave. I bit back a curse. I was trapped, but I couldn't give up yet. I quickly scanned the cave. It was large, made of red rock, with stalactites and stalagmites protruding from the ceiling and floor. Based on what I had just seen, the dragon could smash through them with ease. I glanced down at the demolished stalagmite. Amongst the remains, I spotted a rock. It was small enough to throw, but big enough to hurt the beast, if only a bit.

I looked back at the dragon, meeting its stare. Its eyes showed nothing but hostility. I shuddered and looked away, my amber eyes flicking quickly to the left. The entrance (and in this case, exit) tunnel to the cave was a mere fifteen feet away. If I sprinted, I could make.

The dragon made a hissing sound, and its throat started to glow. It was going to kill me with fire. As that realization dawned, I snatched up the rock and threw it one swift movement. The stone glanced off the dragon's shimmering orange scales. The beast whimpered and looked at the injured spot on its hip. That was all the time that I needed.

I sprinted for the opening, leaping over stalagmites and ducking under stalactites as I ran. I could feel my chestnut hair flowing behind me, and I grinned. My plan had worked, and I was already in the tunnel before the dragon realized what was happening.

However, the dragon made up for the time it had lost. It was much larger than me, and therefore took longer strides. It caught up with me quickly. I could feel the dragon's hot

breath on my back, and ran faster. Powered by adrenaline, I ran with such speed that my eyes teared up from the wind.

After two minutes of this, I began to tire rapidly. I knew that I could only keep this up for so long, and then the dragon would catch me. It really was a shame. All that effort to live, and for what? I would be devoured in a single bite.

It dawned on me that I was slowing down. Even adrenaline could only keep me going for so long. I was drooping, my speed quickly diminishing, when I finally saw it. The exit to the tunnel was finally in sight. I would soon be free, and live out a long life.

Or so I thought. What I didn't realize was that the dragon had wings. As soon as we were outside, it took to the air. The beast spread its majestic wings, blocking out the sun. I had seen hawks hunting before, and if dragons were anything like the birds of prey, it was about to dive in for the kill.

I ran to a big, sturdy oak tree that stood just outside the cave. As I caught my breath, I dug my bow and quiver out from a knothole in the tree. I don't know why I ever thought to leave them there in the first place, but I had them now. I pulled my weapons free of the tree just as a ball of fire set the tree aflame.

I felt the blast of heat hit me. I turned quickly, covering my face, and ran for cover. I slung my quiver over my shoulder as I ran. Luckily I had left my bow strung when I had stashed it, so all I had to do now was nock an arrow and shoot. As I ran, I looked for a suitable spot to kill the dragon.

There! I glimpsed a hill and made a beeline for it. I ran like the wind, dodging fire the dragon hurled at me. Miraculously, I made it to the top of the hill safely. I looked down at the fiery inferno before me, and knew that I had to stop it now.

In one smooth movement, I snatched an arrow from my quiver and nocked it on my bow. I fired. The arrow arched through the air. It was quite majestic, and after all that had happened in the past fifteen minutes, I was glad to see the arrow hit its mark.

It must have happened very quickly, but I saw it in slow motion. The arrow whistled through the air, and struck the dragon in the center of its chest. I saw the beast stare at the arrow in shock, and heard the wail of agony that soon followed.

In that moment I felt bad. Although it was a murderous beast, the dragon was a creature too. Maybe I shouldn't have come to that cave that day. Maybe I shouldn't have killed the dragon. But no, I told myself, and still do, it was a matter of life or death. Kill or be killed. And at that moment, I didn't want to be killed.

About the Author

Gabriella Saracco is twelve years old. She is in seventh grade at Roosevelt Middle School.

Gabriella lives with her Mother, Father, and older sister Isabella. She has two living pets, Mr. Chinchilla the goldfish and Fred the cactus, and two nonliving pets, Rock the Rock and Bob the pom-pom. Gabriella cares deeply for her pets, although her friends think her odd because of two of them. Gabriella and her friends, Adriane, Sophia, and Madeline, all go to the same school and hangout often. Madeline loves to talk about dragons, which inspired Gabriella to write this story.