

THE DREADFUL DRAGON

A Polish Tale

Long ago in the village of Krakow, Poland, there lived a mighty dragon. His home was in a very large cavern that existed below King Krak's castle. This dragon was not friendly. He was huge and he was always hungry. It wasn't long before this menace ate up all of the villager's livestock.

When there were no more animals left to eat, the dragon began devouring the villagers' children. As you can imagine, this was very upsetting to the people of the land. Even its ruler, King Krak, had a daughter who he did not want to lose to the dragon. So, he offered a reward to anyone who could kill the dragon. The reward was the princess's hand in marriage and the kingdom itself.

Many a brave warrior attempted to slay the dragon, but none succeeded. In fact, the dragon ate them up, armor and all. It didn't take long for all the brave knights of the kingdom to be eliminated. Yet one young man, whose name was Skuba, came forward to try

his hand at killing the mighty dragon. Skuba, the shoemaker's apprentice, was not strong. Few would consider him brave. However, he was pretty smart.

Even so, no one believed he could succeed where so many brave knights failed. But Skuba was confident in his abilities. He believed that the skills of his trade would help him with this difficult task.

The first thing Skuba did was purchase a dead sheep from a neighboring village. He cut open the carcass and filled it with sulfur. Then, using his shoemaker's tools, Skuba sewed the sheep back together. He then placed the sheep at the entrance to the dragon's cavern. There he waited to see what would happen.

When night began to fall, the hungry dragon emerged from its lair. It saw the sheep's carcass and immediately pounced, swallowing it whole. As the sheep slid down the dragon's throat, sulfur oozed out. This caused burning in the dragon's throat. The sheep slid all the way down to the dragon's stomach, burning all the way. The mighty dragon felt as though his insides were on fire, so he swooped down to the lake and began to drink.

The dragon gulped down so much water that he burst apart, from the inside out. His colorful scales rained down upon the entire

village. When the people saw this they cheered because this meant that the dragon was dead. The villagers erected a statue of the dragon which can be seen to this day.

Skuba was labeled a true hero. He married the princess and became the new ruler. The two were madly in love and lived happily ever after.

*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the tale found in Around the World in 80 Tales by Saviour Pirotta. Illustrated by Richard Johnson. Boston: Kingfisher, c2007, pp. 82-83.

