

There were dragons who huffed and puffed and breathed fire and then there was Ernie.

He didn't huff, he didn't puff and he didn't have an ounce of fire in him. He wasn't a dangerous dragon at all, at least the other dragons didn't think so. They made fun of him, called him "Sissy" and "Dinky Dragon".

But, of course, the people in the village and the knights in the castle didn't know that Ernie wasn't like all the other dragons. The villagers were always worried about dragons and asked the knights to fight them. And the knights, of course, liked to prove how strong and brave they were by fighting as many dragons as they could.

Except Sir Cedric. He wasn't very strong and he didn't feel very brave, especially when he came across a dragon. All the other knights called him "Sissy". So, when he saw Ernie wandering in the forest one day, looking for strawberries and playing tag with the squirrels, Sir Cedric hid behind a tree.

But Ernie had seen him, too. And he was scared and hid behind a tree. They both peeped out at each other, Sir Cedric wondering what Ernie the Dragon was going to do and Ernie the Dragon wondering what Sir Cedric was going to do.

Then the squirrels, who had been watching this hide-and-seek, squeaked, "Oh, for goodness sake, you two look ridiculous! You're not a fire-breathing dragon, Ernie, and this knight is just as scared of you as you are of him. You two should become friends."

Slowly, cautiously the dragon and the knight emerged from behind their trees.

"Hello," said Ernie shyly.

"How do you do?" replied Sir Cedric politely.

"So, you don't want to slay me?" asked Ernie.

“No, not if you don’t breathe fire.”

“Oh, no,” said Ernie. “I haven’t got any fire in me.”

“None at all?”

“None at all. Never did.”

“Oh, well,” said Sir Cedric with a sigh of relief, “that’s all right then. I do believe we could be friends.”

So, the two of them went everywhere together, picking strawberries, playing tag with the squirrels, helping little old ladies cross the street and children with their homework. Even running errands and doing gardening when required.

Ernie and Sir Cedric were becoming very popular with the villagers but the knights in the castle and the other dragons hated them. They were giving knights and dragons a bad name, doing all this goody-goody stuff.

Then one day a really vicious dragon, named Barbecue Breath, flew into the village on his huge, scaly wings, breathing fire. None of the knights could kill him, he was that fierce. They became more and more frightened and hadn’t a clue what to do. The other dragons had already left; they knew when they were beaten. So, the knights decided to run away to castles where dragons were easier to slay.

Sir Cedric and Ernie figured something had to be done. Barbecue Breath was terrifying the villagers, burning their crops, disrupting their peaceful life and generally being unpleasant. So, they laid a trap for him.

They had noticed that Barbecue Breath had a weakness for squirrels; he had already eaten quite a few. They asked their friends, the squirrels of the forest, to gather together at a certain spot and run around, squeaking. The squirrels agreed, even though they felt nervous and not quite sure the plan would work.

The next day, as planned, the squeaking and scurrying of the squirrels attracted the attention of Barbecue Breath. The vicious dragon lumbered through the forest, roaring, "I smell squirrel! I eat squirrel!"

Suddenly from behind a tree jumped Ernie, blocking his path.

"Who are you?" roared Barbecue Breath.

"Your worst nightmare!" Ernie roared back.

"Ha, ha, ha! You?" laughed Barbecue Breath still breathing fire.

"Yes, me and - look behind you!"

Barbecue Breath turned to look and there stood Sir Cedric, determined and ready. With one swoop of his large, sharpened sword, strapped to a long pole, he chopped off the head of the vicious, fire-breathing dragon.

It was over in a minute. Ernie and Sir Cedric looked at each other.

"Well done, partner!" they said together and then back to the village they went.

The villagers thought Ernie and Sir Cedric were wonderful; the plan had worked, Barbecue Breath was no more. The squirrels were also glad the plan had worked and that not one squirrel had been eaten.

"Now what?" asked Ernie. "Are people going to expect us to be dragon and knight again? And not friends?"

"Hmmm," reflected Sir Cedric. "It's just possible that we will be expected to conform to convention and take up our traditional roles."

They looked at each other. They smiled. Then they went off to pick strawberries.