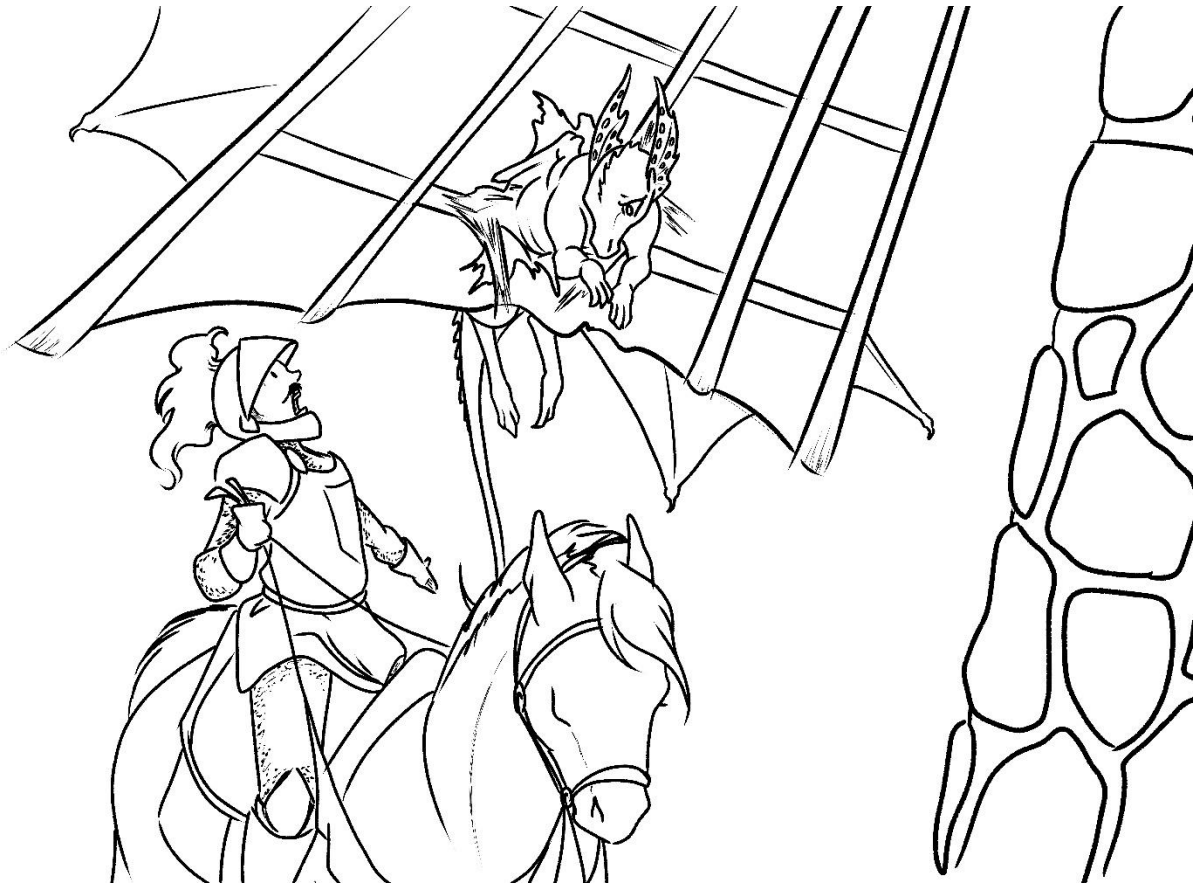


Story Segments by Tobia

Lt. Theophilus and Diperie



The Captain was one of the few men who could remain unscathed through any challenge thrown at him, facing both street scuffles and pirate raids with the same steely calm. In all the years I have served under him, I have known only one thing to fray his nerves: the Duke's cat. It was for the sake of this cat, beloved of the Duke and Duchess but no-one else, which the Captain and I rode towards the docks. "The ambassador is more than welcome to keep that cat, *if* he happens to have it at all." The Captain growled, and even I had to agree. The cat's sudden and mysterious disappearance had coincided with the Girion ambassador's departure. To both it was considered a good riddance, but the Duke and Duchess wanted the cat back.

We were nearing the port, only beyond the ridge of hills, when I thought I heard a pathetic wail. "Captain, do you hear that?" The Captain paused and listened. At first there was

nothing but the sound of far off seagulls, and I thought I'd imagined the cry. But then it came again. The Captain turned to me with furrowed brow, and I suspected we were thinking the same thing. The cry was high and grating, though not something one would expect to hear from a cat. But then, the Duke's cat did have an excessively annoying howl. "Good ear, Lieutenant. This could be it." The Captain said, as he turned his horse towards the sound, up the hill to where the windmills stood.

But the closer we came, the less the cry sounded like that of a cat. The Captain narrowed his eyes. "This isn't right. I've heard something like this before, only louder, rougher." He stopped his horse suddenly "Lieutenant, it's a dragon..." He signaled for me to stop, and then pointed to the third windmill. There was the dragon, wedged tight through a hole in the mill's lowest sail. "It...it's so small, only a hatchling!" I gasped. "Irritating creature, but not the one we're looking for." The Captain grunted, gathering up his reins. I held up a hand. "Captain, just a moment. Can't we do something for it?" "Our mission was to rescue a cat, not a dragon. That creature is none of our business." The Captain said sourly, and I faintly heard him mutter 'Neither is the blasted cat, for that matter.' "We've already come all this way, sir." I said, lamely. The Captain sighed, and raised his eyes with an air of martyrdom. "Be quick about it, then."

I spurred my horse towards the windmill. The hatchling heard my approach, and looked up. The frills along the serpentine face flared in hopeful gesture. A female, I thought as I noted the pattern on the frills. "I'm stuck! Help, I'm STUCK!" The hatchling howled, straining her pinned wings and twirling her tail. "I can see that. Now hold still, let me see if I can get you down." I stopped my horse underneath the sail, and looked up. It appeared that the hatchling had broken through not just the sailcloth, but the lattice as well. Broken pieces of wood pressed against the poor creature like teeth. I frowned when I saw that, and the hatchling, following my gaze, whimpered. "It hurts. Is it eating me? I think it's eating me!" "It can't eat you, it's only a windmill. But I dare say you've gotten yourself into a fair amount of trouble. What is your name?" "Diperie." "Well, Diperie, I'm Lieutenant Theophilus. I think I can get you down, but you have to keep still and do as I say. Can you do that?" Diperie nodded vigorously.

Gingerly I stood on my horse's back, and then pulled myself up onto the sails, using the lattice as a ladder. The sail creaked and shifted, Diperie gasped. "It's alright, Diperie, stay still." I gripped the lattice with one hand, and used the other to pull out my knife. I began to cut away the sailcloth around the trapped dragon. "How did you get so stuck?" I asked. Diperie's frills flattened against her head, which drooped in dragon shame. "The monster was waving its wings at me, teasing me. T-that's mean! So I was going to bite it. I was going to show it how fast I can fly, how hard I could bite. But then the monster's wing bit me!" "It's not a monster, Diperie. It's a windmill- just a building with sails of cloth and wood." "It's a mean building! It was showing off, flapping its four big wings in my face..." Diperie sniffled. Huge tears rolled down her long nose. "Don't worry about it. Here, you're almost out! Let me just take care of this lattice. This might hurt a little bit." I shifted position, trying to move without swinging the sail, and pried away the lattice splinters. Most of them were cracked enough to be pulled off, some required whittling.

Diperie squirmed as the broken pieces of sail loosened around her. The windmill sail shuddered, and I nearly lost my hold on the lattice. "Hold still, Diperie! Hold still!" But Diperie was a winged creature, and needed to fly. She gave her wings an experimental wriggle, and then pushed out of the sail with a jubilant screech. The sail jerked as she left it, and wrenched out of my grip. Things would have gone better if I also had wings, but my flight was a brief one, and it ended harshly. The impact emptied the air from my lungs, and filled my vision with bursting stars. Gradually I heard a voice above the ringing in my ears. "Lieutenant Theophilus! Oh no, are you DYING?" A long face, upside down, pushed in front of my bleary vision and snuffed my face. I still didn't have the breath to respond, but had just enough strength to roll over and push myself up onto my knees. I was nearly knocked back down as Diperie sprang up and capered about me.

"You're alive! I'm alive! And I'm free! Free!" Suddenly she screamed and ducked behind me. There was no use in hiding when her wings and tail stuck out, but I understood her terror when I looked up. The Captain was galloping towards us, and the look on his face was like a thunderstorm. I had no time to wonder where he had been or what he had been doing, in mere seconds he was standing over me and shouting. "Lieutenant! The Girion ships have left the port!" "They...what? A day early?" Once again stunned, this time from shock, I could think of nothing better to say. The Captain was nearly snarling. "While you were fiddling with that hatchling I went further up-hill to see if we were any closer to our quarry. But it's too late now. We might have caught them if we had continued at full gallop! You've ruined the mission, Lieutenant! You and that blasted dragon!" Diperie broke out into loud and shuddering sobs. She climbed onto my lap and buried her nose into the crook of my arm. It was awkward, considering she was the size of a great Dane. Even with all else, the loss of the mission, the possible loss of my job, our embarrassment, I still felt pity for the young dragon. "Please, Captain, she's only a hatchling." I pleaded as I patted Diperie's back, being mindful of the sharp ridge. "And maybe..." I added, as an idea dawned on me "She might be able to help us."

Questions:

What key ingredients can you identify in this story?

How does speech show the different personalities of the characters?

Something to think about:

The plotline of rescuing Diperie from the windmill had a beginning, climax, and conclusion. But the plotline of rescuing the Duke's cat is incomplete, ending on a cliff-hanger. In this way the scene is finished, but the story can still go on.

Prompt:

How would you finish this story? How could a flighty dragon rescue a cat?

Facing the Serric Platoon



“Klassen, the Serric platoon has been spotted. It should be coming your way any minute now.” Gimén’s static voice crackled into my earpiece, jarring me to attention.

“Are you ready?”

“Yes, sir.”

There was a pause. Then Gimén spoke again.

“It will be alright, Klassen. We know you can do this.”

It was hardly helpful to hear Gimén trying to be comforting in his monotone way. He was a Gua. The Gua were as cold on the inside as their sharp, exoskeletons were on the outside. They didn’t understand emotions such as fear; just as the Serric weren’t so familiar with the concept of negotiation. The only reason Gimén knew my tension was by measuring my heartbeat through his monitor, and the only reason he was doing that was to know if I would remain alive for much longer.

The ground trembled, I heard the churning rumble of feet and machinery, and presently the platoon came around the bend. I breathed a quick prayer, and stepped into view with hands raised. The Serric 1st Lieutenant straightened to his full height, his luminescent mane made huge as he flared it in surprise.

The platoon behind him halted with a jolt. The canyon road grew ominously bright as fifty glowing manes snapped open. Then fifty guns lowered in my direction, and clicked.

I threw myself to the ground in time to miss a torrent of bullets. When the volley died down, I rolled to the side and up onto one knee. I lifted my hands behind my head in a gesture of submission.

“Hold fire! I come peacefully! Hold fire!”

The 1st Lieutenant examined me with squinting white eyes. His claw-tipped finger was ready on the trigger.

“And why should I?” He snarled.

“Here’s one reason,” I said, and removed my helmet. I wouldn’t be able to breathe the atmosphere for long, but I could risk taking off my helmet just long enough to catch the Serrics’ attention, and I did. Many of them drew back, but the 1st Lieutenant leaned forward, his eyes suddenly wide.

“It can’t be!” He gasped.

“You’re... human?”

I was used to this sort of reaction. Over the years I’ve learned to have my fun, and would have responded with ‘only on Tuesdays’ and a deadpan blink. But this encounter required tact.

“Yes. I’m a genuine human.” I rasped. The tangy air was already burning my lungs.

“I have a message for you, 1st Lieutenant. It’s urgent.”

Questions:

What key ingredients can you identify in this story?

Which details offer clues to the story’s setting, and which details offer clues to the story’s tone?

Something to think about:

Out of the five senses, this story uses sight and sound the most, taste and feel only slightly, and scent not at all. Not every detail needs to be mentioned, but those that are must be relevant to the story.

Prompt:

How would you finish the story? What is the urgent message?

Story Segments by Students

My Perspective, by Mikaela B. Age 10

Chapter 2: Caught

One day a shadow came over our part of the reef. It was odd because there were blotches of light. Then it came down in the water. It caught me, my sister Maleficent, my mother, Mary, Josh, Larry, Bob, and Julia. There was also another girl beta fish. We were put in a plastic container. Now, we were from Hawaii, but we were transported to C-----, B.C. We were a favour to a man's brother, so we were being sold in the street. Of course, we were all stressed, especially my mother. We were being sold to kids for 2 dollars. First went Bob, then went Mariam, then Mary and Julia, Josh and Larry and then my mother. The other girl was my sister, Lea. I couldn't tell, she was too far away, but then she was sold too. Then my heart broke. Maleficent was taken away from me. Now just me. Lonely me.



Notes: My Perspective was a perfect name for the story. Seeing the world through the eyes of a fish was interesting, and I especially like the mysterious description of the net. In this chapter, Mikaela thinks about all the emotions a fish may feel over being caught and sold: confusion, stress, grief, and loneliness.

Work-in-Progress, by Ben S. Age 10

Act One

Scene One

Topper mops up a room no-one even uses. Although it's abandoned, it is protocol that all rooms must be mopped. Spotty is not really helping to clean the already empty room, just randomly pointing out specks of dust brought in by Topper. Topper is upset because the Shield Resistance slipped in an extra day to his banishment, and he found out.

Spotty: "seriously man, what are you so grumpy about?"

Topper: "you'd be grumpy if you were waiting for something for five whole years, but then had to wait an extra day for it"

Spotty: "you're talking about being banned from the flight academy, aren't you?"

Topper: "what tipped you off, the five-year thing?"

Spotty: "I... guess so. I think I'll go to my bunk now... but before I go, I might as well tell you a few stories to cheer you up"



Notes: Scripts and comics are excellent but often dismissed forms of creative writing. A child that is hesitant to write could still have fun creating a story with a fresh format. In this scene, Ben vividly shows the personalities of his characters. Topper is touchy, but hard working. Spotty is cheeky, but a good friend.