

# Magical liquid

Arundel and Peveril have been sent by the King of Albion to slay the dragon, which torments the people of his kingdom, feeding on their livestock and killing maidens.

The king has been told by Ambrosius, the sorcerer, that in the dragon's lair they will find a magical liquid that will cure the King's daughter, who is dying. Arundel and Peveril must find a silver dagger on their journey, which will help them slay the dragon.

Arundel and Peveril set off one day in early spring. Peveril recites to himself the instructions Ambrosius has given him: *through the fields and forest to the top of the highest mountain, over the bridge and follow the path.* Arundel has in her pocket a scroll, with the prophecy given to her by Ambrosius:

*From the heart of the dragon's chest,  
sweet and salt and sparkling light,  
a ruby liquid you must test,  
then use to put the world to right.*

They begin their journey by setting off over the fields and mountains into the forest. After several long hours, they come across a deep clearing in the forest and there, in front of them, is a deserted castle.

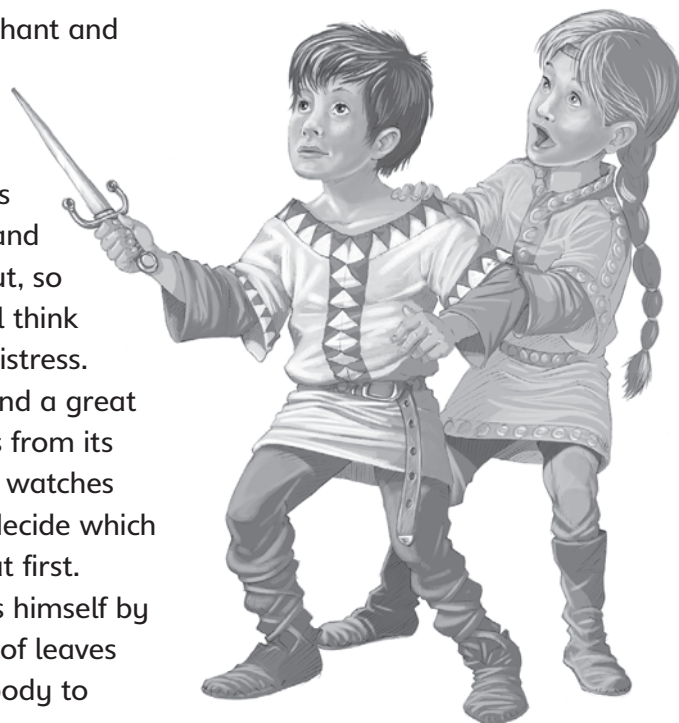
Peveril clears away the sheets of ivy over the entrance, and Arundel manages to turn the big iron hoop that opens the door. Inside are rows of knights' armour, dusty and covered in cobwebs. They search high and low for the silver dagger they need to slay the dragon. Peveril spots it glistening out of the corner of his eye and snatches it up quickly. They scramble out of the castle and run and run until they stumble across a rickety old bridge and path, which leads to the dragon's lair.

They continue along the path and begin to smell charred bones and roasting flesh. The dragon is awake, sitting at the opening to the cave, guarding his treasure. It is bigger than any animal they have seen before – at least three times bigger than an elephant and bright red with gleaming orange eyes. Arundel catches the dragon's eyes. She screams and flaps her arms about, so that the dragon will think she is a damsel in distress. The dragon roars and a great plume of fire comes from its mouth. The dragon watches Arundel, trying to decide which bit he is going to eat first. Peveril camouflages himself by throwing a blanket of leaves and vines over his body to

shield himself from view, and creeps up to the dragon while it is distracted by Arundel. Before the dragon realises what is happening, Peveril plunges the silver dagger into its heart.

Arundel and Peveril look around the dragon's lair for the magical liquid. Among the bones and fur and feathers they find an old chest. Inside, there are jewels of every colour, but no bottle or flask that might contain a liquid.

Arundel looks round. Blood is dripping from the wound in the dragon's heart and fizzing on the ground. She nudges Peveril. Could that be the magical liquid they're after? Is it 'sweet' and 'sharp' and 'sparkling light', as the old rhyme says? Could it possibly cure the Princess? How do they even know it is safe to drink?



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