

## THE DISCOURAGED KNIGHT

BY JAMES J. COLLINS

In a far off kingdom, a fire breathing dragon was threatening a small town. Everyone was afraid so they sent for the country's hero known as the Bright Knight. Everyone agreed he had the shiniest armor and the biggest smile anyone ever saw. He was confident for he never failed to succeed.

As the knight rode across the kingdom, people came out to greet him and tell him what they knew about the dragon.

"The dragon was twelve feet long with a golden head and blew out two feet of fire," said the tailor at a small town.

"Did you see the dragon yourself?" asked the knight.

"No," said the tailor, "but my cousin the blacksmith in the next town did."

That night it rained and in the morning the knight noticed some rust on his armor and his sword. He tried to polish it, but it wouldn't come off.

At the next town he found the blacksmith.

"Oh he's much bigger than that," said the blacksmith. "He's twenty feet long and the flame shoots out five feet. He has spikes on his

back and two heads, one gold and the other blue."

"Did you see the dragon yourself?" asked the knight.

"No but my brother the merchant in the next town did."

That night a great fog rolled in over the countryside. When the knight awoke he found his armor was so covered in rust that he was bright red. He could not clean his armor, so off he went.

At the next town the merchant described the dragon to the knight. "Oh he is large- fifty feet high and the flames from his mouth are ten feet long. When he walks, he shakes the ground and his roar keeps people up all night."

"Did you see the dragon yourself?" asked the knight.

"No but everybody around here has seen him and they will tell you all about him.

The knight sat down to think about what he heard. He was very discouraged. He was not smiling. He was sad. Just then a plate fell off his suit of armor and he looked down. His armor was black, dirty and rusty and the leather straps looked worn. He was a mess.

Just then a little girl, pulling a little wagon with a box in it, came up to the knight, stopped and looked at him.

"My father said you came to help us," said the little girl, "but I don't think you can do anything looking like this. You look too discouraged. It shows in your appearance. You won't succeed until you get back to being confident."

"You're right," said the knight as he got up and went over to a stream. He washed his face and hands and using sand polished his armor, his shield and his sword till they shined. Then he smiled. He

felt good again.

"Where's that dragon?" he asked as he picked up his sword. "I'll finish him off."

"Oh please sir don't hurt my dragon," said the little girl.

"Your dragon? How can a little girl get close to such a great scary beast?"

"But sir, he is only little," said the young girl. "He is my pet."

"Isn't he fifty feet high?"

"No sir, much smaller."

"Twenty feet?"

"Smaller."

"Five feet and breathes fire?"

"Oh no sir, he is only two feet long. He is a Komodo dragon from the zoo. He doesn't breathe fire, but he flicks his tongue out like a snake and he scares people because he looks different and makes funny noises."

"Did you see the dragon yourself?" asked the knight.

"Oh yes sir," she said, "and here he is," as she opened the box on the wagon.

The knight looked in and saw the little girl's pet and began to laugh. He laughed so long and so hard that his armor shined like the sun.

All his worry was because he listened to wild stories people told him. As the dragon got bigger in his mind, he got discouraged and he could not do his job. Always remember that things are rarely

as bad as they seem. Have faith; trust in God, stay happy and you will defeat the dragons.

THE END