

The Princess, The Dragon &
The Very Bad Knight.

by Stuart Baum.



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The **P**rincess, **T**he **D**ragon
& **T**he **V**ery **B**ad **K**night.

For Hadrian Alexander Baum
(Prince Hal)



by **S**tuart **B**aum



Part One

Once upon a time there was a Princess named Nyssmah. When she was born, she was a very little baby. When she was a one-year old, she was a very *little* one-year old. When she was a two-year old, she was a very *little* two-year old. And when she was a three-year old she found a dragon's egg.

Princess Nyssmah knew that she wasn't allowed to bring anything into the castle without checking first with the Royal Steward. The Royal Steward, thought Nyssmah, was in charge of saying "No." Which is why, when she brought the dragon's egg into the castle, she did *not* check first with the Royal Steward. He would have said "No." Instead she put the dragon's egg into her closet. And, like all little girls, forgot all about it.

Our story begins with the sound of a dragon's egg hatching. The sound attracted the Royal Dog, which sniffed at the closet where Princess Nyssmah had stashed the dragon's egg. The Royal Dog attracted the Royal Housemaid who was sure there was Some Sort of Animal in the closet. The Royal Housemaid was afraid of many things. But, more than anything else, she was afraid of Some Sort of Animal in a Closet. She went to get the Royal Steward who went to get the Royal Butler who went to get the Royal Exterminator (who is in charge of removing All Sorts of Animals from closets or from anywhere else.) The Royal Exterminator opened the closet door and found a baby dragon.



All this excitement attracted Princess Nyssmah, who was not afraid of Some Sort of Animal in the closet — especially since she knew exactly *which* sort of animal was in *this* closet. The excitement also attracted the King.

The Royal Exterminator knew what to do about mice. He knew what to do about bugs and snakes and raccoons and all Other Sorts of Animals. But the Royal Exterminator did not know what to do about a baby dragon in a closet. Princess Nyssmah did.

“Can I keep him?” she asked

The Royal Steward quickly said, “No.”

Princess Nyssmah put on her very best “I Love My Daddy Face” and asked the King, “Can I keep him, oh Daddy that I love? Pleeease?”

“Of course,” said the King. The Royal Steward threw up his arms and shook his head and rolled his eyes and sighed a long sigh.

Now that we have begun the story and hatched our baby dragon, it’s time to meet the Knight. Like all knights, this one started out as a baby boy. When he was born he was a very big baby. When he was a two-year old, he was a very *big* two-year old. When he was a four-year old he was a very *big* four-year old. And when he was a six-year old, Princess Nyssmah had asked her Daddy, the King, if she could keep the dragon.

The boy-who-would-become-a-knight’s name was Brophy (with a hard “o”). Brophy’s dad was the Royal Champion. The Royal Champion did not like Princess Nyssmah’s baby dragon, because he thought it was a bad idea to have a dragon in the castle. The Royal Champion knew that baby dragons grow up to be *big* dragons. And he knew what *big* dragons did: *big* dragons carried away

princesses and ate them. The Royal Champion's job, among many, was to rescue princesses whenever they had been carried away by big dragons. Princess Nyssmah had yet to be carried away by a big dragon, but should she ever be, it was the Royal Champion's job to get her back uneaten.

Brophy, like his father, did not like Princess Nyssmah's new pet. But for a different reason. He did not like the Princess' pet because he was spoiled. He wanted the dragon to be *his* pet. Since he could not have the dragon himself, he decided that no one would have the dragon. So this is what he did:

One day, when Princess Nyssmah and the dragon, who was bigger now, were playing, Brophy ran to the Royal Champion and said, "Daddy! The dragon bit me!" The Royal Champion looked at Brophy's hand, which was indeed bitten (Brophy had bitten it himself), and took Brophy to the King.

"Your daughter's dragon has bitten my son," the Royal Champion said to the King.

The King, who was busy sitting on his throne doing what kings do when they are busily sitting on the throne, said to the Royal Steward, "Bring the Princess and the Dragon here at once."

When the Princess and the Dragon arrived, the King asked, "Nyssmah, is it true that the dragon bit Brophy?"

The Princess glared at Brophy and said, "No, Daddy. The dragon was not even *near* Brophy."

"Well, then," the Royal Champion asked Princess Nyssmah, "how do you explain *this*?" He showed her Brophy's bitten hand.

"I don't know," she said. "Maybe Brophy bit it himself."

"Don't be fresh!" said the King. (*We* all know that Brophy had bitten his own hand, but no one else did.) The King took another look at Brophy's bitten hand and said, "This is not too bad.

Perhaps the dragon was just being protective of Nyssmah.” The Royal Champion began to protest, but the King waved him off.

“Please try to be *more* careful,” said the King.

Princess Nyssmah said, “I shall be *careful*, father.”

Brophy was upset that his plan did not work. So like all little boys, he tried it again. He bit his hand once more and told his father once more, who told the King once more, that the dragon had bitten him. And once again, Princess Nyssmah was told to be more careful, but the dragon was allowed to stay in the castle. Then Brophy thought up a different plan.

The dragon had learned to breathe fire. It is far Too Complicated to explain why dragons can breathe fire while boys and girls cannot, so this story will not try to explain how fire-breathing works. But the fact that Princess Nyssmah’s dragon *can* breathe fire gave Brophy an idea. It was a rotten idea. It was a *really* rotten idea. It was such a rotten idea, in fact, that when Brophy thought of it, his eyes turned from blue to brown — just for an instant.

Brophy went in to Princess Nyssmah’s room and set fire to her dollhouse. Then he ran up to the Royal Steward and yelled, “Fire! Fire! The dragon has set fire to the Princess’ room!” I told you it was a *rotten* idea!

This plan worked. The King did not mind so much that the dragon was biting Brophy. (Remember, no one else knew that Brophy was biting himself.) The King was actually *pleased* that the dragon was protecting his daughter. But a fire-breathing dragon was a dangerous thing to have

in the castle. And the King told the Royal Champion to take the dragon far away. So far away that the dragon would never find his way back to the castle.

Princess Nyssmah cried and cried for days and days, but soon the King got her a puppy, which she named *Puppy*, and she was happy once more. Brophy giggled and giggled for days and days, but when the King got Princess Nyssmah a puppy he was jealous once more. And since the puppy did not breathe fire, still Too Complicated to explain, Brophy never managed to get the puppy thrown out of the castle.



End **P**art **O**ne.





Part Two.

We rejoin the same story thirteen years later. Princess Nyssmah has grown up into a beautiful, though still somewhat small, young woman of sixteen. Her puppy, named *Puppy*, grew into a big dog named *Puppy*, got old, got *very* old and, like all animals, eventually died. Her new puppy, this one named *Droopsy*, also grew into a big dog, which is what he is now. Her father, the King, did not grow in size, but he did grow older. He also grew happier. His daughter was going to be married the following day. The man she was marrying was a Prince named Alladrio. Prince Alladrio was from another land and was strong, tall and as nice as anyone could be. The King was happy that Princess Nyssmah had found a man as wonderful as Alladrio to marry.

Brophy grew up to be Sir Brophy, the knight. He was the biggest, strongest, fiercest man in the whole kingdom. He wasn't afraid of anything or anyone. Since he was so strong and so fearless, he was named the Royal Champion and it was his job to rescue the Princess if she were ever carried away by a dragon. But child(ren), listen, because this is *important*: The only thing worse than a bad child is a bad grown-up. And, unfortunately, Brophy was a bad grown up — or in his case — a Bad *Knight*. He still wanted whatever anyone else had. And the one thing he wanted most of all was Princess Nyssmah. He wanted to marry her. And he was very mad that she was marrying Someone Else — no matter how nice or good that Someone Else was. Since he could not marry Princess Nyssmah himself, he decided that no one would marry her.

He did not know what he would do to make sure no one married her, but he knew that it would be Something *Rotten*.



Now child(ren), you have to fly for a moment. While you cannot fly in real life — it is Too Complicated to explain why not — you *can* fly in a story. And if you want to see the Dragon again, you *must* fly. Our Dragon, like all dragons, lives at the top of a tall mountain. So, grow your wings and come fly for a short while. Let's go see our Dragon.

Fly up into the air, across the land and over the small hills. Fly past the gigantic forest and over some more hills. Here come the tall mountains and here we go! Up, up, up, and more up until we get to the very top of the tallest mountain in the world. Right at the very top, there is a cave and in that cave — Look closely, but don't touch! — is our Dragon. He has grown up, too. Like Brophy, the Dragon has grown up to be very, *very* big. And very, *very* strong. Fortunately he has *not* grown up to be very bad. However, he *has* grown up to be very unhappy.

The Dragon still missed Princess Nyssmah. No one gave *him* a puppy and no one was there to love him, so he was all alone on top of the mountain. Once in a while, he would fly down into the country looking for castles. When he found a castle, he would fly in, carry away whichever Princess lived there and — no, he did *not* eat them — he would look at them very careful to see if they were Princess Nyssmah. When they weren't, and they never were, he would put them back unharmed. Over and over he did this. And every time the princess he looked at was not the *right* princess he would grow sadder and sadder.

So, look into the cave and see the biggest, strongest, yet saddest dragon in the whole world.

But quick! Let's fly back to the castle! Hurry now! Fly as fast as you can! You don't want to miss what happens next!



What Happens Next

Good! We got back just in time! Just in time for the party. Everyone, even Droopsy the dog, is at the party. It's the night before Nyssmah and Alladrio's wedding and it seems as though everyone in the castle is as happy as can be. There are parades and jugglers and puppet shows and marching bands. There are elephants trumpeting, horses neighing and All Sorts of Animals making All Sorts of Noises.

"Look at all these animals!" shouted the King over the noise. "There must be every animal in the world here!"

"Yes," said the Royal Steward, who was also very old now. "Every animal in the world, except dragons!"

"That's right!" said the King. "There are no dragons." Then he thought about the time when Princess Nyssmah was a little girl and she had a pet dragon. "I wonder what that baby dragon is doing now?" the King asked the Royal Steward.

"Probably carrying off princesses and eating them," said the Royal Steward matter-of-factly.

"Probably," said the King. But somehow he could not imagine our Dragon carrying off princesses and eating them.

Meanwhile, Brophy had heard every word of the King and the Royal Steward's conversation and it gave him an idea. It was a *rotten* idea. It was such a rotten idea, in fact, that when Brophy thought of it, his eyes turned from blue to brown — and they never turned back.



After the party was over, when everyone was asleep. Sir Brophy snuck into Princess Nyssmah's room and stole her. He put her into a big sack and put her onto the back of his horse. Then he set fire to her bed to make it look as though a dragon had flown into the castle and carried off Princess Nyssmah. Then he galloped his horse as fast as he could away from the castle toward the tallest mountains in the world. He planned to kill Princess Nyssmah and leave her in a cave, so it looked like a dragon had killed her.

In the morning, on the day of the wedding, Princess Nyssmah was gone and her bed was burned up. It looked just like a dragon had carried her off.

"Quick!" said the King. "Call Sir Brophy, the Royal Champion!" But the Sir Brophy was gone, too. (Again, only *we* know that he had stolen Princess Nyssmah.)

"Perhaps he has gone to fight the dragon," said the Royal Steward.

"Yes," said the King. "That is what must have happened." Everyone in the castle was as sad as could be — even Droopsy the dog. They already missed Princess Nyssmah and hoped that Brophy would rescue her so they could have the wedding.

Once again, child(ren), you must fly if we are going to see what happens next. Quick! Grow your wings! Grow your wings and let them carry you over the land, over the hills, past the forest, over more hills until we get to the tall mountains. And there, halfway up the mountain, is Sir Brophy carrying the Princess-In-A-Sack. And there, right at the top of the mountain, is a cave. Sir Brophy climbed to the cave and pulled the Princess-In-A-Sack into the cave.

"Help!" screamed Princess Nyssmah. "Help! Someone please save me!"

Brophy opened the sack and let the Princess out. At first, she was happy that Sir Brophy was there. "I am saved!" she shouted. But then she soon realized that Sir Brophy had taken her and that he had pretended she had been carried off by a dragon. Which all means, she thought, that he is going to kill me. "Help!" she yelled again. "Help! I have been carried off by a Very Bad Knight!"

Sir Brophy put his hand over her mouth. "There is no use shouting, Princess," he said. "Nobody can hear you. We are too high up in the mountains for anybody to come rescue you."

Sir Brophy was right. *Nobody* could hear her screams. But *something* could: our Dragon. Our Dragon heard Princess Nyssmah's screams and knew that he had finally found the *right* Princess. He quickly flew over to the mountain — it was just two mountains away — and he arrived just in time.

Until you have seen a fight between the world's strongest knight and the world's strongest dragon, you have only seen skirmishes, disagreements and meddlings. This was a true fight. A battle. A *fire-breathing, sword-smashing, teeth-gnashing, shield-crashing* battle like no battle has ever been battled before. First the dragon had the upper hand — or *wing* as it were. Then Sir Brophy had the upper hand. Then the dragon. Then Sir Brophy. Then neither. Then the dragon again. Then Sir Brophy again. Then, well, Sir Brophy again. Then, well, *still* Sir Brophy. Then it looked pretty bad for the dragon. Then it looked *really* bad for the dragon. Then it looked *hopeless* for the dragon and you would think that Sir Brophy had won and he would kill the dragon and then kill the Princess. And that would be that.

But the Princess picked up a loose rock and threw it at Sir Brophy. The rock hit him squarely in the head and he looked up for a second and turned toward the Princess. This gave the dragon

his chance. He took a deep breath. So deep that he breathed in almost all the air in the cave. Then he breathed out the biggest breath of fire he had ever breathed out. Probably the biggest breath of fire any dragon had *ever* breathed out in the history of the world. Right at Sir Brophy.

The blast of fire-breath knocked Sir Brophy out of the cave and off the side of the mountain. It was such a long way down that he might still be falling today. In any case, Sir Brophy was never seen again.

Princess Nyssmah got onto the dragon's back and down they flew to the castle. They got there so fast that the Princess had just enough time to say one sentence. She said, "I will never let you go away again."

But quick, child(ren), don't just sit here in the cave! Grow your wings again and fly, fly, fly to the castle. You don't want to miss the wedding do you?

✿
The Wedding.

No matter how many weddings you have been to — especially if you have never been to *any* — you have never seen a wedding like this one. Picture the world's most beautiful Princess dressed in a wedding gown so sparkly and white that it is too bright even to look at. Picture the world's most handsome Prince dressed in a tuxedo so smart that it could solve the world's hardest mathematical problems all by itself. Picture a Dragon in a bow tie as the Best Man - or Best *Dragon* as it were. And picture Droopsy the dog as the *flower dog*, holding a basket of dried rose petals and daffodils and all your Favorite Flowers. Still not enough? How about a wedding hall filled not just with people, but with *animals* of All Sorts and Kinds. And imagine them all dressed in *people* clothes! A lion in a suit and tie! An octopus in a fancy party dress! And a giraffe in a top hat! In other words, it was a wedding like never before. And it lasted all night long and through the better part of the next day.

And, of course, everyone and *everything* lived happily ever after.