

STORYTELLER 4: The men in the city decided to fight the dragon...

VILLAGER 2: *(Holding up a sword)* I will fight the dragon.

VILLAGER 3: *(Holding up a sword)* I will fight the dragon.

VILLAGER 4: *(Holding up a sword)* I will fight the dragon.

VILLAGER 5: You will not!

VILLAGER 4: Okay. *(Puts sword away)*.

VILLAGER 6: *(Holding up a sword)* I will fight the dragon, and I will kill it!

VILLAGERS 2, 3 and 6 ALL exit, striding purposefully.

STORYTELLER 4: ...but so many of them died that they soon stopped trying.

STORYTELLER 3: Eventually the people held another meeting.

VILLAGER 1: What shall we do?

CHILD 2: Maybe the dragon is just hungry?

VILLAGER 5: What can we feed it?

VILLAGER 1: *(Looking at CHILD 1)* Children.

CHILD 1: Sheep.

VILLAGER 4: Brilliant idea!

VILLAGERS and CHILDREN all freeze.

STORYTELLER 2: And so the people of Silene fed the dragon one of their sheep every day.

STORYTELLER 1: They could fetch water whilst the dragon was eating.

STORYTELLER 3: It was a good idea.

STORYTELLER 4: But no one had thought about what they would do when the sheep ran out.

STORYTELLER 1: Which, eventually, they did.

STORYTELLER 2: Leaving the good people of Silene in even bigger trouble than before.

STORYTELLER 1: And, then, a brave stranger came riding into town...

VILLAGERS and CHILDREN all unfreeze and exit, chatting nervously.

STORYTELLERS all exit.

SCENE TWO: *The Hermit's Cave*

A HERMIT sits quietly at the entrance to his cave. GEORGE 'rides' up on his horse and 'dismounts'.

GEORGE: *(To audience)* I am George. A soldier brave and true. I have travelled across many countries helping where I can. Righting wrongs and generally being a good guy.

He spots the HERMIT.

GEORGE: Hello old man.

HERMIT: I'm not an old man, I'm a hermit.

GEORGE: Which means?

HERMIT: I live a life of solitude. Alone. On my own. Peacefully.

GEORGE: Sounds lovely.

HERMIT: It was until the dragon moved in.

GEORGE: Dragon?

HERMIT: In the valley by the spring. Big, nasty, fire-breathing dragon.

GEORGE: But why should that bother you?

HERMIT: Because everyone wants to talk about it. It's dragon this and dragon that.

GEORGE: Oh, dear.

HERMIT: Then there's the people walking by with sheep. Men going off to fight it, some of them coming back ripped to pieces. It's chaos.

GEORGE: It must be very difficult for you.

HERMIT: It's a nightmare. What's the point in being a hermit if no one will leave you alone?

GEORGE: Perhaps I can help.

HERMIT: Yes. You could stand out there and tell everyone to move along.

- GEORGE:** No, I mean with the dragon.
- HERMIT:** Well you'll have to be quick. The dragon wants children to be sacrificed now.
- GEORGE:** What do you mean?
- HERMIT:** We were feeding it sheep but, now that they've all gone, it wants children.
- GEORGE:** Oh, no!
- HERMIT:** They're pulling names out of a hat. It starts today. If you're quick you'll catch the draw.
- GEORGE:** Where?
- HERMIT:** How should I know? I'm a hermit. An outsider.
- GEORGE:** Please, hermit, I have to help.
- HERMIT:** In the main square.
- GEORGE:** I will save the children! I will slay the dragon and free the city from this fearsome beast.
- HERMIT:** Good luck with that.
- GEORGE:** *(Holding his sword aloft)* I have no need for luck with my trusty sword, Ascalon, in my hand.
- HERMIT:** You named your sword?
- GEORGE:** Of course.
- HERMIT:** Oh, well, if it makes you happy...
- GEORGE:** Thank you, Hermit, you have been most helpful. For a man who lives in solitude, you know a lot.
- HERMIT:** I haven't had much choice.
- GEORGE:** You're a good listener. It's a gift.
- HERMIT:** And a curse.

HERMIT exits. GEORGE 'remounts' his horse and 'rides' off in the opposite direction.