

**THE PRINCE  
WHO  
SMELLED  
SMOKY**



*and why it isn't really cool to start  
puffing without thinking first*





## THE PRINCE WHO SMELLED SMOKY



*and why it isn't really cool to start puffing without thinking first*

### I. The Prince

**F**ar away but not so long ago in a deep valley between high mountains there lived a puffing prince, the only son of a rich and powerful king. For some reason, which no-one has yet explained to me, he thought puffing was cool. And how badly he wanted to be cool! He wasn't very tall and he wasn't very brave and he wasn't very sure of himself. So he puffed.

He puffed at long cigarettes in short holders and short cigarettes in long holders.

He puffed expensive cigars from Cuba  
....and cheap cigars from who-knows where.

He puffed briar pipes  
....and meerschaum pipes  
....and clay pipes

.... and even a great hubble-bubble pipe which he kept in the cellar in his wing of the castle.

He lived there by himself because his mother, a formidable lady, did not approve of his puffing. "I allow your father to smoke" she would him gently but firmly, "but only one cigar in the billiard room on Tuesday nights when we have the other kings to dinner. But you are the heir to the throne and you have to set a good example. *Just look at you.* Your fingers are yellow and your teeth are yellow. You smell smoky, your hair smells smoky, your clothes smell smoky and you cough. Go on like this and you'll be so out of condition that you even won't be fit enough to kill yourself a dragon and save yourself a princess let alone rule this kingdom...

.....if you live that long." she would add as an afterthought.

But the Prince never listened to anyone, even his mother. He was too busy thinking about how to be cool., "Yes Mother," he would say and retire to rooms where he puffed ever harder than before and thought about being cool.

But although he never listened to anyone the prince was a gentle and good natured fellow and nobody could ever call him mean. Indeed he was open handed to the many servants who served him and dressed him and emptied his ash trays and they repaid him by telling him what they knew he wanted to hear.

"How cool you are" they would say. "How well you dress and how handsome you look".

“Thank you George,” the Prince would say, or “Thank you Betsy; here is a carbuncle from my collection” .

The prince called all the men servants ‘George’ and all the women servants ‘Betsy’ because he never recognised them and never learned anyone’s name. He was too busy looking at himself in the mirror and wondering how cool he was. Even when nearly all the Betsies and quite a few of the Georges took to wearing gas masks because the palace was so smoky he hardly seem to notice though he did once remark, “Betsy you look a bit pale” and, on another occasion, “George you’ve



shaved your beard” .

The other princes who hung about round the stable yard also found it worthwhile to praise up our puffing prince. They encouraged his smoking and gave him little presents to gain his favours:

They give him cigarettes

.....and fancy lighters

.... and cigarette boxes

.....and cigarette holders

...and ash trays and

.....even a little silver knife to cut off the ends of the cigars

and, in return, the prince gave them much larger presents: opals and sapphires and gold sovereigns.

But among themselves they had a low opinion of him. For them 'extreme sports' like riding fast horses, and killing dragons and rescuing beautiful princesses seemed far cooler than merely dressing up and smoking. So behind his back they called him a cowardly custard and not even a cool custard at that. .

But servants listen, and one day a George, or was it a Betsy, told the puffing prince what they had overheard the other princes saying and that made him very unhappy.

"What can I do," he wailed. "How can I keep my cool?"

"Kill yourself a dragon," said one of the Georges

"And win yourself a Princess," said another.

"But dragons are very fierce," said the puffing prince. "They have spines and big sharp teeth and breathe fire."

"Not all of them," said one of the Betsies, "I know one who is a pussycat".

"And has it got a princess?" asked the prince.

"It has," said the Betsy, "up a tower. My auntie cleans for her."

## 2. THE DRAGON



The kings and princes lived on the mountain slopes one side of the valley and the dragons lived right across it, in caves under the shadow of a great volcano. The young dragons hung out round the crater where they could look down and see the fire and talk about how one day they would catch princesses and tie them to trees and win battles with knights who came to free them. Among the young males there was also a great desire to be cool and for nearly every one of these “cool” meant “hot” and “hot” “meant fire and smoke. The girl dragons hung out with them and had their own slogan, *equal rights. equal fights.*

So they would all would prance about and belch fire from their throats and blow smoke though their nostrils until the air round and about them smelt even worse than the Puffing Prince’s palace. Any wizard will tell you that too much smoke and fire is very bad for young dragons” health and often causes diseases later which shorten their lives just as it does

in humans. But the young dragons paid little attention to the wizards. “Old bookfuddies” they called them and would shout out after them .. “Where’s your princess eh?” a cruel taunt since wizards commonly live far longer than their wives.

But there was one dragon that was different. He preferred walking in the woods to belching fire on the crater’s rim. He didn’t care much about being cool and he could **read**. Writing, it is true, was difficult. Dragon’s claws are not suited to holding pens... But how he read old books and new books,

...poems and stories,

.....fat books with many pages and no pictures and

.....thin books with fewer pages and many pictures.

He read comic books and cookbooks and catalogues and even a whole dictionary from cover to cover.

The other dragons teased him. ... “You get your books” they would shout after him. .“We’ll get our princesses”, but they never went further than teasing from a safe distance, for our book dragon was large and green and strong. When he did belch fire and smoke (which was very, seldom) his breath could burn forests.

He lived in a large cave on the edge of the forest. His father and mother, dragons of legend and feared for miles around, had both died of chest complaints so he lived alone with an ancient hobgoblin who had sore legs and couldn’t hobgobble any more. Hobgoblin cooked and cleaned for him and, disguised as an old lady, collected his books from the town library down in the valley.

One day our book dragon looked up from the wild boar he was munching.

“I’m lonely,” he said in a loud voice.

“Go and talk to the other dragons” said the hobgoblin.

“They’re boring”.

“Then go and find yourself a princess.”

“But she’ll scream and shout. The knights will be round here like flies. I’ll have to fight and I don’t like fighting. I’m a book dragon not a fire dragon. What I need is a book princess not one of those wibbly kinds.

“In that case,” said the hobgoblin, “we’ll have to advertise.” Let me try to see what I can knock up. Half an hour later he came up with a small advertisement to take down to the local paper in town.

*“Vegy dragon with GSOH seeks princess, any age, to share views and interests. Excellent accommodation, generous allowance. Contact Box 111 to discuss possible arrangement. Total discretion.”*

“But I’m not a vegetarian,” said the dragon.

“With the reputation you dragons have,” said the hobgoblin, “how do you think we’ll get any answers if you don’t say that?”

“And what is GSOH?”

“It means *good sense of humour*” said the hobgoblin, “All the other advertisements seem to have it. I’ve got a joke book if you need it.”

The dragon nodded. “I like the bit about “generous allowance” he said. “Now perhaps I can spend all that gold and all those jewels I have never known what to do with.”

And now it is time for me to tell you something more about the dragon. His parents, you remember, had been very large and fierce and had laid waste to several castles. The treasure chests they had dragged from them were piled one on top another at the back of the cave from floor to ceiling.

The Book Dragon like the Puffing Prince was **loaded**.

### 3. THE PRINCESS

In the town at the bottom of the valley there lived a princess. She had no castle and lived in one small room with her mother the queen, a small, sad but determined lady. The less said about her father the better. His wife gave out that he had run away to a distant land to seek his fortune but in reality he had taken off one weekend with all the crown jewels in a small suitcase. They never saw him again and rumour has it that he gambled everything away playing cards and betting on tournaments.

His wife and daughter were therefore very poor indeed. You could easily call them *unloaded*. They were never invited to parties with the other royals for they had nothing new to wear and no way of entertaining in return. So when the queen saw the dragon's advertisement she begged and pleaded with her daughter to follow it up.

"I'll just humour her" said the princess and agreed to meet the hobgoblin in the coffee shop outside the public library.

"I'm sorry; I could never marry a dragon," she began.

"He doesn't want you to marry him," said the hobgoblin, "just to discuss books. There is this Harry Potter for instance and all the mistakes he has found in it."

"But I could never live in a smelly cave".

"He'll build you a tower, light and airy, all mod cons with an en-suite bathroom and a jacuzzi ."

"But I could never let him come up and see me. It would make my room too smoky"

"He could never climb that high. He has asthma. He'll just sit on a rock on the side of the mountain and talk to you from there."

"But I can't eat the food you eat".

"You can hire the best cook in town".

"But I've got nothing to wear."

“On the allowance he’ll give you, princess, you can order your clothes from Paris and your jewellery from the most expensive shops in London,”  
said the Hobgoblin.



And so that is why the princess agreed to go up as soon as the tower was built

“... for a trial period you understand.”

“Very soon,” she thought to herself, “a handsome prince will come and rescue me and we will get married and live happily ever after like it like it says in all the books.”

#### **4. THEN WHAT HAPPENED**

With the high wages that the dragon was paying, any builder would get a move on, so the princess’s tower was completed in record time and she moved in together with a French chef and two maids who had their own quarters two floors below her. At first she regarded her conversations

with the dragon as mere duty, but as the weeks went by she began to like his company more and more. In addition to being well read and well mannered, the dragon revealed itself as thoughtful and surprisingly good company. He listened as well as talked and was good at seeing other people's point of view. So when, after two months, the princess saw the puffing prince ride over the horizon she was not quite as happy as she might have been. True, from a distance he certainly looked all that a prince should look like. He rode a white horse and wore armour inlaid with gold which gleamed in the sunlight. It was the hobgoblin's day off and the time of the dragon's siesta, information he had found out from the Betsy's auntie who had been paid liberally for it.

He jumped off his horse and stood on the ground far below the princess's window.

"Princess, princess," he called out, "let down your hair so I can climb without a stair".

It was at this precise moment that the princess, whose hair was fashionably short, began to experience serious misgivings.

"Take the lift, you Wally," she called down to him. "It's seven stories up here."

No expense, as I told you, had been spared and the lift, though small, was one of those that talked to you. "Entrance hall," it said, "Storerooms", "Generator", "Nothing Much" "Nothing Much," "Servants' suite", "Kitchen" and finally, "Princess's Penthouse."

As he stepped out of it the prince gave a low bow, looked towards the princess and declaimed, "O thou art fairer than the evening air, clad in the beauty of a thousand stars".

"Did you write that for me?" asked the princess.

The puffing prince nodded and smiled, but he hadn't really listened to the question.

“Well how come the dragon read it to me just last week from a poetry book?”

But the prince still hadn't heard her. He never listened to other people. “Let me clasp you in my arms and save you from the loathsome dragon,” he went on.

“You ‘clasp me’?” The princess looked him up and down. He was pleasant enough looking, but his fingers were yellow, his teeth were yellow, his breath smelled smoky, his hair smelled smoky, his fine clothes smelled smoky.

“No way,” she said sadly. “You smell much worse than my dragon,” and with this she moved over to the wall and pressed a small red button marked *Panic* in discrete tasteful letters.

But the prince still did not hear her. He never listened to other people. “We will ride away together, on my white horse.”

The princess walked over to the window and looked out. “What white horse was that then?” she asked innocently.

This time the prince **did** hear her and rushed over to the window. There was, indeed, no white horse anywhere to be seen. Instead below the tower, green and glossy, barbed tail twitching and white teeth glinting sat the dragon.

“I never really believed he was a vegetarian” said the princess,

The puffing prince turned a pale shade of grey. “Bbbut that dragon looks big and fierce,” he stammered. “They told me he was a pussycat.”

The princess leant out of the window and called out. “This prince here thinks you're a pussycat”. The dragon lowered its head to a foot or so above the grass and belched out a great wave of flame which seared a whole meadow of fireweed which grew at the forest edge.

“I think,” suggested the princess gently, “that you should leave now. You have a sweet face but you *don't* listen and you *do* smell. If I were you I'd go *very* quickly. I'll call the lift”

Running in armour is not all that easy and the prince fell over once or twice but in a remarkably short time he was over the horizon and back to the castle and there he stayed for many weeks not venturing out of his room. Not even the Georges or the Betsies could stop laughing at him and his tales of a fierce dragon who had eaten his horse were believe by few, for had not people seen an old woman carrying library books visiting town from time to time on that very horse ?

In the end his mother called him to her. “My son” she said, gently but firmly “I want you to rule this kingdom after your father and to have many children. I want you to be a strong and healthy father for them. You say you met this princess. Then prove it by inviting her to the king's birthday ball next month. Ask her to bring an escort and tell her that if she finds none, you would be honoured to serve. You might be able to patch things up particularly if you stop smoking in the meantime.”

And for the first time the prince listened, and in his mind he saw himself as the beautiful princess had seen him, standing there in the tower all smoky and selfish. He realised that the dragon had let him go, not wishing to hurt him or the princess. And he felt small and ashamed and for the first in his life wondered what being cool really meant.

So an invitation was sent via the library and the prince made a superhuman effort to give up puffing. This affected his nerves so badly that he would shout and rant at the Georges and Betsies until many seriously thought of leaving. But every day after he had stopped, not puffing became just a little easier and his temper became just a little better and every day they scanned the mail for the princess's reply.

It came on the day before the ball delivered by a very old woman with bad knees riding a strangely familiar white horse.

*The princess accepts the King and Queen's kind invitation to a ball and will attend with HER escort.*

On the night of the ball every prince and princess in the land attended and all wore their most splendid clothes and their most sparkling jewellery. But none could match the ball gown worn by the princess in the tower. White silk, it was, designed in Paris and sewn about with pearls and jade

... nor could anyone take their eyes off the great diamond in her tiara

...nor her emerald earrings,

...nor the gold waistcoat with ruby buttons which her escort wore so suavely over his shiny green scales as, carrying his tortoise shell and platinum cane, he swept up the grand staircase with his scaly tail snaking elegantly behind him and his great white teeth glinting in the candle light as he smiled at the assembled guests.

The prince fought back tears. He had tried so hard, and it had been so difficult to stop puffing. But as she passed him, the princess gave him a little sniff and a little smile and pressed a note into his hand.

He opened it later behind one of the palm trees in the buffet where they were serving the champagne. It read:

*WELL DONE... KEEP IT UP ... Then... perhaps.*



## A NOTE TO TEACHERS

### **About this story**

This is a story written for nine or ten-year-olds in Europe or North America but it would be suitable for any children who are familiar with English fairy story traditions, e.g. many of those working round the world in English medium schools. Note the use of colloquial slang here e.g. “cool”, “loaded”, “Wally”. This would have to be changed depending on the country of current use.

The message is based on research that proves that the most effective deterrent to stop children smoking is to prove to them that it puts off peers and makes the child look and smell unpleasant. Telling children that it will affect their lives later has little effect. The other messages, about listening about girl’s smoking and about what it means and doesn’t mean to be “cool” are woven in gently around the theme.

The story is told with humour rather in the manner of the wonderful cartoon feature *Shrek* where the ogre turns out to be the “good guy” just as the dragon does in this tale.

### **Activities**

This story is particularly suitable for *drawing, modelling and puppet making*. Older children can convert this to a puppet show for younger ones.

Surveys by younger children of adults and, if they can get away with it, of older brothers and sisters would be particularly effective. “Why did you start smoking?

Why do you do it?” “What might put you off?

Nearly all pre-teenagers are either anti-smoking or undecided, so discussion groups based on “what would put people off smoking” are useful as is analysis of smoking adverts where these are still permitted.

*Source: Child-to-Child London. Written specially for this publication by Hugh Hawes in consultation with colleagues and his many grandchildren.*