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To Ethan,

who fought the fire and won,

and his mother, Sarah.



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Dear Reader,

A story should take us on an adventure. This adventure began when I met a boy named Ethan and his mother, Sarah, in a hospital. Ethan had been burned in a fire and I wondered what I might do to help him feel better. I believe that when we use our imaginations we can create anything we want—whether it's an exciting game, a beautiful picture or a funny joke, even a solution to a challenge we may be facing. It can encourage us to be brave and optimistic when we feel scared or alone. Our imaginations are very powerful because we are very powerful.

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So, as I began creating *The Dragon King*, I thought about what I would like to see and read and hear in a story. I wanted it to look like the chapter books that I read as a child, with enough illustrations to begin painting a picture of the story, but would still leave room for my own imagination to fill in the rest. I asked my 15-year-old daughter, Johanna, with her youthful perspective, to create the images that you will see. The music, I knew, must be inspired

by musical theatre, as if the listener was watching the action played out on a stage. I wanted my hero, Ethan, to be able to overcome all obstacles but with compassion and respect for others.

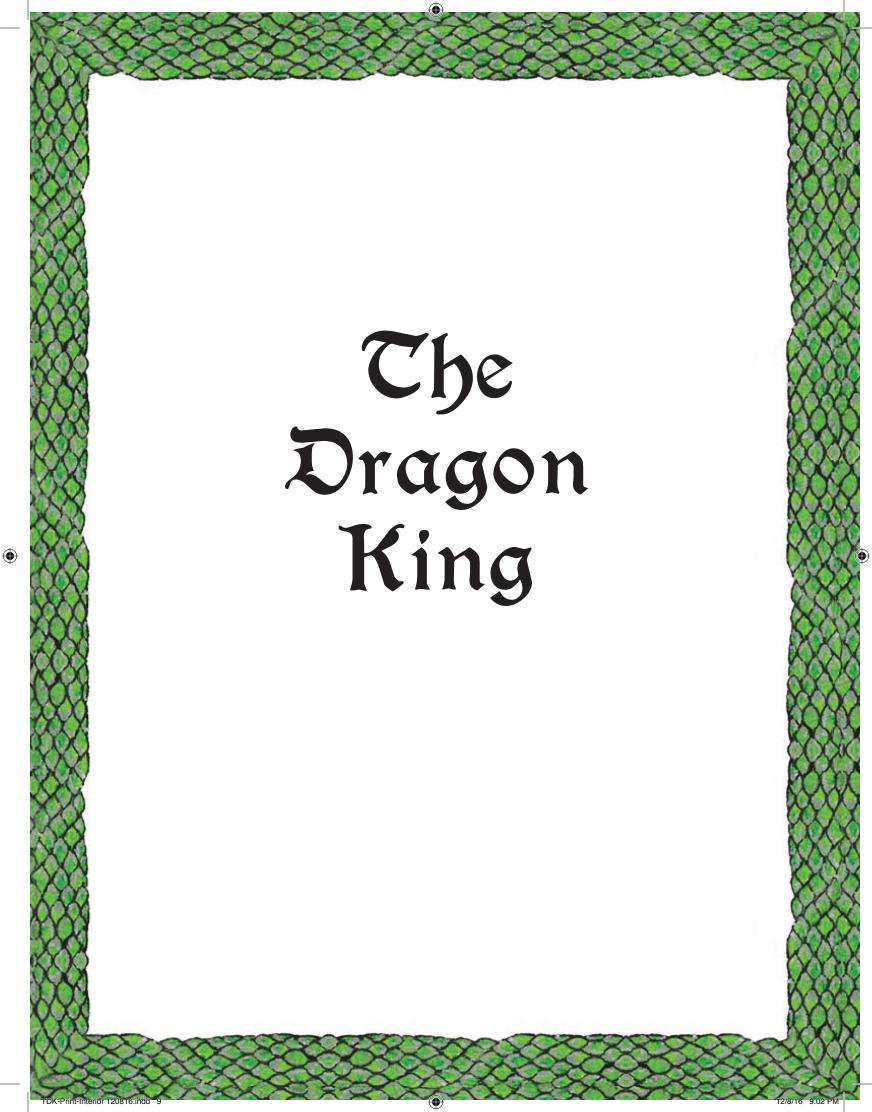
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But of course, I created *The Dragon King* because I thought it would be fun! And I believe wholeheart-edly that when we do those things which make us feel joyful and happy, we help create a more joyful and happy world.

I hope that you will always create that which makes you happy!

Blessings,

Vivian



(song "Lend Your Ear" page 48)

here once was a boy named Ethan.

Ethan was no ordinary boy, however. Ethan was a king.

Ethan became king when his father, Edward Alexander VI, was unexpectedly killed during a hunting expedition. The whole of the kingdom was thrown into great mourning, for the people all loved their departed ruler deeply. And so it was that the crown was prematurely placed upon the head of Edward's only child, Ethan.

Young Ethan tried his very best to rule the kingdom as he knew all good kings should. He was careful to pay attention, not to fidget on his throne while holding court, not to trip on his robes or talk with his mouth full. He knew that being king meant being considerate and responsible, and wise.

Still, you know, Ethan was a boy. And he liked to do what all other children like to do—such as wade in the creek and climb trees and build forts. But he liked also to read and to study the stars at night as he lay on his back in the cool grass, and he felt that he was much better suited for these sorts of activities.

It's not that Ethan didn't want to be king; it's just that he wished he didn't have to be king so soon. There was so much to learn.

Plus, he really missed his father.

Ethan's mother, Queen Sarah, thankfully, was strong and resilient. She was untiring in her tutelage of the newly crowned king.

Every night, after Ethan's room lamps were lit and his pillows fluffed, Queen Mother Sarah would sit on the side of his bed and tell him stories of the great kings and queens who ruled before him, stories full of heroic battles, wise counsel and unwavering faithfulness.

And each night, just before she kissed him and blew out the lights, she predicted that there would come

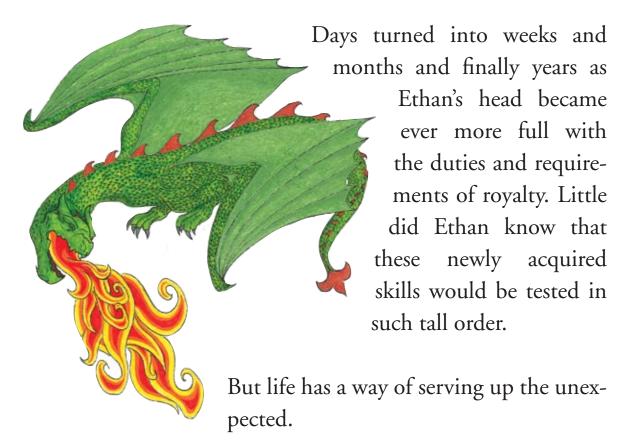
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a time when he too would have to protect his kingdom even when he was afraid and hurt and ready to give up. Ethan thought his mother must be very wise to know these sorts of things.

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And so it was that on a beautiful, cloudless day, the unexpected appeared in the sky. A dragon of beastly proportions cast its long shadow over the kingdom, setting its treetops ablaze and leaving a trail of ash through its grassy meadows.

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The people crowded, terrified, at the castle gates crying, "King Ethan! Help! You must do something! Send your strongest knights to slay this awful monster!"

So Ethan summoned the captain of his guard who assembled a hundred of the king's champion knights, and they all galloped from the castle to seek out and kill the ferocious dragon before it might do more harm.

For weeks the armed men searched throughout the forests and all over great Black Mountain which lay on the western border of the kingdom.

But few returned. One by one they staggered, scorched and defeated, into the royal court to bow low and humiliated at the feet of King Ethan.

And each knight's story was the same.

"This bloodthirsty serpent was so fierce and cunning," he cried, "I was barely able to escape with my life! Never have I battled such a horrifying creature!"



"What am I to do?" Ethan wondered as he retired that evening to his private chambers.

The night's twinkling stars seemed so close that they might fall from the sky and in through his open window. There in the dark of his four poster bed, Ethan could just make out the silhouette of Black Mountain, which he now knew was the dwelling place of the dreaded beast.

"I've sent my bravest and most trusted warriors to slay this terrible monster," he thought, "and they have all failed. My kingdom is in grave danger and as king, I've pledged to protect it. But how can a boy rid the land of a dragon? What makes me think that I can do what my knights could not? If only I were stronger."

Ethan remembered his father, Edward, arriving home on horseback to greet his young son after a long and arduous journey. How confident and capable he looked in his suit of polished armor, his sword and shield resting at his side. "If only he were here now, he would know what to do!" Ethan brooded despondently.

But Edward was not there and Ethan knew that no amount of pleading could bring him back. This weight of responsibility rested like a stone on Ethan's chest as he lay in the darkness, well aware that a king did not hide under his bed covers like a child waiting for the storm to pass. But the thought of such an impending and seemingly impossible task sent chills down Ethan's spine. Never, until now, had he fully appreciated just how hard it might be to be king.



s the sun rose early the next morning, Ethan dressed himself in his toughest chain mail. He had not yet been sized for his first suit

of armor, as was customary on his 14th birthday; the metal was still considered too heavy and cumbersome for someone his age. He peered awkwardly at himself in the mirror, his sword and shield dangling uncomfortably at his sides. How proud and excited he had felt when he had last worn his battle attire in the spring tournament; how easy everything seemed then. That feeling had now been replaced with ominous dread.

Golden leaves from the great oaks, which lined the ancient avenue, fell like snow upon Ethan and the Queen Mother as they progressed slowly towards the gates of the city, arguing as they walked.

"You are too young, Ethan!" she protested. "I will not allow you to place yourself in such danger!"

"But if I don't, then who will? I'm not yet a man, but I am still the king. You said yourself that a time would come when I would have to protect my kingdom regardless of the outcome. Have you not been preparing me for a day like today? You may be my mother, but you can't keep me from doing what I know to be right."

Sarah did not reply and for a time each regarded the other quietly, as it seemed the decision had been made. Sarah searched her son's eyes, so much like his father's. She felt her heart would break knowing

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that her only child should have to bear this terrible burden. But taking a deep breath, Sarah collected herself. She then peered deeply into Ethan's eyes and asked in a clear and deliberate voice, "Ethan, my son, what makes a just and honorable king?"

Ethan knew the answer, for his mother had asked him this same question many times before—a ritual that was always followed by some sage advice. Ethan often listened with one ear only, however, distracted by those things boys are usually distracted by.

Yet, this morning, Ethan looked squarely back at his mother and stood up straight. (Any advice was good advice when marching off to face a dragon and today he knew enough not to squander hers.)

Holding her gaze, he replied as he had been taught, "Faith, courage, wisdom."

"Yes," she responded as she rested her hands solidly on his shoulders.

Sarah's words were always gentle even when they were

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firm. Yet now in her voice, Ethan heard a steeliness that resonated right into the very center of his chest, as if she was infusing him with her iron will.

"Now Ethan, remember what I am about to tell you because it is of the utmost importance. It is the one thing you must do above all others. See yourself defeating the dragon. But not only see it—feel it, hear it, smell it. Feel the sword in your hand and with the strength of 20 knights deliver the deadly blow. Hear the dragon's angry bellows and your heart pounding like a drum in your chest. Smell the stench of his hot breath full of fire and ash. Imagine your elation once you are victorious and your beloved kingdom is at last safe. See yourself defeating the dragon and you shall, Ethan. You shall." *(song "Queen Sarah's Lullaby" page 51)*

Sarah enfolded Ethan in her arms and her son held fast, wishing secretly to never let go. Then reluctantly and with great effort, he drew away and with a final kiss, turned and faced Black Mountain.

The road led west through a valley of long autumn grass which murmured in the breeze. Jumping the

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fence rail, he cut a path through pasture land which brought him into the forest at the base of the mountain. The smell of pine accompanied him as he slowly began his ascent. At first the climb was relatively easy but as the sun rose in the sky, the slope became steeper and he found himself tripping over roots and loose rocks. Sweat trickled down his back. His sword and shield became heavier with each step.

He wondered, "Did my father or his father ever face a dragon? Were they afraid, like me? Certainly, they were older and stronger and better with a sword."

Ethan recalled his weekly weaponry exercises. He seemed much more adept at getting away from his opponent than wielding a



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bone crushing blow. He was small and quick, darting around the teacher, who laughed and complained of getting dizzy.

"You are like a bee buzzing around my head. I'm waiting for you to sting! Use your strengths, Ethan, brains over brawn."

"Brains over brawn—hmm," thought Ethan. "I'd take brawn over brains any day when facing a thousand-pound monster."

"But it does no good to dwell on what is not," echoed the voice of his mother.

"But I want it to be easier!" he heard himself protest out loud.

"Then stop making it difficult."

"Stop making it difficult?!" Ethan silently retorted, "Oh, that's easy for you to say; you're not hiking up a mountain to pick a fight with a fire breathing dragon! What a ridiculous idea, anyway."

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But Ethan was tired of arguing with himself.

In fact, Ethan was just plain tired. By the time he reached the top of the mountain, his legs were heavy as lead and he was covered from head to foot in dust. The sky yawned purple as he crawled exhausted under the nearest tree to sleep on a heap of pine needles.

News of the king's departure spread quickly throughout the land. Ethan was dearly loved by his subjects, who feared they would never see their young king again. And so while Ethan slept, throngs of his citizens gathered, building fires to stand watch and wait at the foot of Black Mountain.

At dawn, Ethan woke to a most horrible stench. The wind had changed direction over night and now he smelled what could only be the dragon. But he heard nothing—not birds, squirrels, or insects, only the wind.

"The dragon has frightened everything away," Ethan concluded. Then he pictured his many brave knights who had battled the dragon and failed. "I've embarked on a fool's errand," Ethan remarked hopelessly. "How can I succeed when others could not? I'm no king, I'm just a boy."

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Tears welled up in Ethan's eyes and spilled over his cheeks. He hung his head in his hands.

Never before had the young king felt so small and alone.

For a time Ethan peered down east into the valley, the wind singing in his ears. Golden rays began to dance off the turrets of the castle and its surrounding rooftops. The valley was beautiful in late September; farmers were harvesting the fields, flocks of migrating birds swept the distant sky and the trees burst red and yellow.

How he loved his kingdom and his people.

Then, from some far corner of his memory he heard his mother's voice speaking softly to him. "Ethan, never forget that courage is not the absence of fear, but doing what you know to be right in spite of it.

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Face your fear and it will lose its power over you."

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Ethan mulled these words over in his head. "Face your fear—and it will lose its power over you."

And he wondered, "How would I behave if I wasn't afraid?"

Ethan had never before considered this idea, and for the first time since the dragon had appeared, the young king felt a spark ignite within him.

"So-how would I behave?"

"What would I attempt to do?"

"How bold would I be—how fast, how strong, how clever?"

As Ethan contemplated these new possibilities, he noticed something extraordinary. He began to feel remarkably different; his feet no longer hurt, his stomach was no longer tied in knots. His back no longer ached from sleeping on the hard earth.

Ethan pulled himself up off the ground and stood tall. Then in a clear and commanding voice he said, "I see myself defeating the dragon."

And again: "I see myself defeating the dragon."

The young king closed his eyes and began to play the battle scene over and over in his head, picturing every moment in finite detail as if it were in slow motion. He felt his left fingers curl around the handle of his shield while his right swung the gilded sword in broad powerful strokes, heard the gravel scraping under the soles of his boots as he dodged the dragon's flaming jaws.

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Ethan's veins began to pulse with excitement. If he could imagine himself defeating the dragon, then it must be possible! It must! Had his mother not told him story after story of the great kings and queens who overcame seemly insurmountable obstacles through sheer courage and determination?

"If they could do it, I can do it!" Ethan proclaimed out loud. (song "Anything is Possible" page 52)



uietly Ethan began to search for the dragon's lair. It did not take long to find, for the closer he came, the more charred were the trees and underbrush until finally

he arrived in an area that was completely barren. Piles of bones, armor, shields and helmets blackened with soot littered the ground—all that was left of the many courageous knights that had sacrificed themselves for their king. An anger such as Ethan had never known began to rise up inside him fueling his resolve.

Smoke curled out through the mouth of a cave and from its cavernous hole erupted long rhythmic rumblings. "The dragon must be sleeping," Ethan thought as sweat trickled down his brow. The heat was almost unbearable. He took a steadying breath and then commenced to survey his surroundings in hopes of constructing a plan of action.

"I must take him by surprise if I am to have any chance at all. If I wait above the cave's entrance, I can perhaps coax him out and then attack from behind." He slipped silently around a large outcropping of rock, taking great care to stay hidden from view of the cave. Then climbing up and over its opening, he grabbed a handful of stones and flung them out in front of the hole, listening hard as the pebbles clattered on the rocks below.

A minute crawled by, then another. Nothing stirred within the mountain.

Ethan's trembling hand scooped up another fistful of gravel. He threw again.



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"What foolish creature would dare venture so close to the cave of a dragon?" The low menacing growl reverberated from deep inside the darkened entrance. Each word vibrated in Ethan's chest and shook the mountainside.

"I do believe I smell something—human. Hmm... but small. Yes, small like—a boy. Now what do you think a boy would be doing in such a dangerous place like this? Why, he could get eaten! Ah, but let me guess? He's come to rid his kingdom of the horrible, bloodthirsty dragon."

The monster chuckled at his own humor.

"Fool of a boy, I don't believe you realize just what you have gotten yourself into. However, today is your lucky day for I have grown fat off the king's knights and haven't the slightest bit of room for even a morsel as small as you."

Then yawning from what could only be boredom, the serpent finished his thought.

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"So, run along home now to your mother before you try my patience."

Ethan sat quiet as a mouse but his heart pounded in his ears, so loudly that he wondered if the dragon could hear it. Not a muscle did he move, crouched precariously on the rocky ledge, his legs cramping, his mind racing.

A ripple of panic washed over him. "Now what?" he queried.

He took a deep breath in an attempt to master his fear. "He wants to intimidate you, Ethan; *stay calm*," he silently reassured himself. "You can *do* this! Brains over brawn!"

In a disappointed sort of voice, the dragon continued, "You won't answer? Pity. I'd enjoy a bit of conversation; it can get so dull up here on the mountain. Granted, I have had quite a few visitors but conversation with a knight is so droll what with all the boasting about saving the kingdom in the name of King Ethan—or whatever his name is, ridding the land of

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my pestilence and—so on and so forth."

An exasperated sigh issued from inside the cave. "And then, not one of them an adversary worthy of my respect—no cunning, no daring bit of footwork! And with one blow of my breath, they all turn to match sticks. Rather pitiful, really."

He tutted disapprovingly.

"So, what kind of ruler is this King Ethan anyway if his knights go running tail tucked between their legs? But I suppose if you want something done you must do it yourself. So, I'm waiting patiently for the king to grace me with his royal presence. You suppose he'll come?"

Ethan felt his grip tighten forcibly around the hilt of his sword, his blood beginning to boil. "What right have you? Just you wait!" he murmured under his breath. *"Just you wait."*

"Even so, I do rather like it here," continued the serpent. "I've hardly need fly about the countryside as

so many meals have come knocking on my door."

The dragon grew quiet. Nothing moved, not even the wind stirred.

Ethan felt like a race horse chomping on its bit, pawing the ground. How much longer must he wait crouched on this rock?

Then the young king heard what he imagined must be the click of impatient talons drumming the cave floor. "I suppose you're going to continue with the silent treatment and since I don't have all day, I will simply have to come out and find you myself."

"Let's play a little game of hide and seek, shall we? It will give me a chance to stretch my wings. I'll count to three. One...two...three. Ready or not, here I come!" (song "Time to Decide" page 54)

The dragon's head emerged. It was enormous. Its scales were a blinding iridescent green reflecting the morning sun. On top of its head were two razor sharp horns each about the length of one of Ethan's

arms. The beast was indeed terrifying like a monster out of one of the boy's most horrific nightmares, so petrifying that the young king suddenly himself became transfixed, frozen in fear—unable to move, to think, to breathe.

"Ethan, get a hold of yourself!"

As if from a dream, Ethan awoke, shaken miraculously from his paralysis. It was time to act! There was no other way! No other choice!

"Don't think... just do it! You've got to do it! Now!"

And he sprung from his perch and onto the dragon's back, thrusting his sword with all his might into the neck of the monster. The blade, however, simply bounced off the serpent's scales without leaving so much as a scratch. The dragon roared with surprised fury and began to buck like a wild horse trying to throw off its rider. Ethan could do nothing now but hold fast to the dragon's neck, his sword and shield slipping from his fingers and clanging on the rocks below.

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Swinging its head from side to side, the dragon began to blow fire over its shoulders. Ethan pressed his body against the monster's back trying to escape the heat but still felt the flames licking his arms and legs. It was as if he were being cooked in a furnace. The pain was agonizing.

The beast then began to ram its own body against the mountainside in an attempt to crush the boy. The earth rumbled as huge boulders dislodged themselves from above and came showering down upon on the pair. Ethan heard a snap and feared it was one of his legs being crushed against the rocks. But it was not; it was one of the dragon's own horns. Without thinking, the boy reached up and broke off the rest of the horn just as he felt the dragon beating its wings, its talons leaving the ground.

A great whirring of wind whipped around Ethan as he and the serpent catapulted straight up into the air. Ethan held on for dear life and watched the ground move farther and farther away.

"This is it; this is the end," thought Ethan, his

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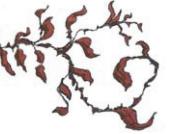
fingers slipping.

And then he saw it—under the dragon's outstretched wing—a bit of tender flesh just like under a bird's wing, soft and vulnerable.

He felt the horn still clutched in his hand. The horn! He still had the horn!

Without a moment to lose, Ethan released the dragon's neck and hurled himself backwards, plunging with both hands the horn's razored tip into the crook of the wing.

He thought his ears would split open as the dragon screamed and flailed in agony, spiraling them both downward and downward through the air, the ground speeding towards them.



Then blackness.



than woke to the sound of someone calling.

"Boy—boy—are you alive, boy?"

Ethan opened his eyes, squinting as images moved in and out of focus. He was suddenly aware of his own body and that it felt as if it had been dipped in molten lava. The waning sun hovered on the horizon, a ball of fire casting long shadows across a crumpled figure that lay a stone's throw away from the boy. Ethan watched it struggle fruitlessly in a pool of its own blood, the horn buried deep under its flesh.

Several minutes passed as Ethan continued to watch the dragon. But surprisingly, Ethan did not feel revulsion for the creature, only pity.

"Why?" he wondered. "Why should I care?"

But to see another living creature struggle wearily

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and helplessly-he could not ignore it.

The dragon spoke again, "Tell me, what is your name, boy?"

Ethan lay silent on the ground.

"Too weak to answer? Well, then I will tell you mine. It is Orak, son of Alun."

Then from the pit of the young man's stomach, an intense pride began to swell giving him the will to speak.

"I am Ethan. King Ethan Phillip Alexander IV."

The dragon sat quietly for a moment, then chuckled mirthlessly. "At last we meet."

For a while, no sound was uttered, only the leaves which rustled high above their heads.

The dragon continued.

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"I have battled many warriors during my long life but never one more courageous and tenacious as you; you must love your kingdom very much. It seems I have been duly outwitted by a mere boy who has beaten me with only his cunning and pure will. Therefore, I must regard you with the highest honor and utmost respect. So, your Highness, what do you think of it—a charred young king and a broken old dragon dying together on a mountain?"

Ethan said nothing.

Yet slowly it began to dawn on him the magnitude of what he had just accomplished. Why, he'd done it! He'd really done it; he'd beaten the dragon. HE had BEATEN the DRAGON! What had seemed impossible before was now in fact a reality!

"It seems a shame, when we could help one another," the dragon continued, interrupting Ethan from his reverie. "I know what you are thinking: 'Why would I want to help the dragon I've tried so hard to kill, and why would he want to help me?' But if you will agree to assist me, I will fly away and never

again return to your land. And I, in turn, will give you what you so desperately need."

"And what would that be?" Ethan asked weakly.

"Come closer and I will show you an old dragon secret."

Ethan considered this. If he did nothing, he felt certain the dragon would bleed to death from its wound and the young king would have indeed achieved his ends. Ethan did not really expect to survive his own burns and only a moment before it had not seemed to matter. But then he began to wonder—if he were not king, who would be? Would they be a wise ruler? Would they love Ethan's kingdom as much as he did? He imagined his mother and how her heart would ache with grief.

Perhaps he would listen to the dragon's suggestion.

"And why should I trust you?" Ethan replied.

"I give you my word. That is all."

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The word of a dragon. Ethan pondered this idea. Could a dragon be honorable? Was a dragon so terribly different from any other warrior that it was not also worthy of a king's respect? Was this dragon truly his enemy, or was it simply behaving as a dragon was meant to behave?

Then as if from somewhere far away, the boy heard again his mother's voice speaking gently to him, "Ethan, my son, what makes a just and honorable person?"

Faith. Courage. Wisdom.

Ethan made his decision. With what little strength he still possessed, the young man pulled himself up off the ground, though the pain was so excruciating he nearly fainted. Slowly, he staggered over to the beast and after grueling effort, pulled off his chain mail. His skin was horribly disfigured: red and blistered and peeling off. He barely stood, weaving back and forth, his head swimming, his eyes still moving in and out of focus.

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In a voice barely louder than a whisper, Ethan said, "Show me your magic, Orak."

The dragon nodded. Then, with one talon, the serpent began to lightly scrape green scales from off his own chest. They floated down to the ground like dry leaves.

"Place these upon your burns."

Ethan did as he was instructed.

"Now, come closer."

Ethan obeyed, resigning himself to possible annihilation. However, he was shocked to see that the dragon had begun to cry. Its tears were gentle as spring rain and with each drop, the boy felt his burns cool. The scales began to soften and stick to his skin until they became his skin: a beautiful, brilliant green like that of a young garden snake. Ethan could not believe his eyes! Miraculously, his skin was now smooth and springy to the touch yet the young man instantly recognized that he was clothed in the strongest of armor. It was as if he had just emerged wet from a swimming hole on a hot summer day.

Ethan peered up into the dragon's emerald eyes and as their gaze met, he saw to his astonishment that they appeared soft and kind.

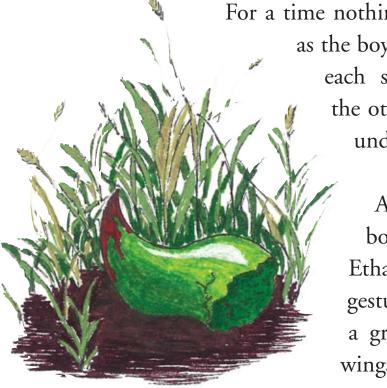
Then the dragon spoke.

"Whenever you look upon yourself, my young king, remember that these scales bear witness to your bravery. No task lies before you so dreadful that you shall not master it.

"So now, if you will return the gesture and do me the great service of pulling out what you so adeptly put in."

Ethan reached up under the dragon's wing and pulled with all his might. The dragon winced as the horn at last slid from the wound. Ethan gathered more scales from the ground, offered them to the dragon, and once wet with tears, placed them gingerly on the gash. Instantly, the wound was transformed with scaly armor. Ethan knew immediately that no horn would ever penetrate that spot again.

The dragon drew breath and raised itself to its full massive stature. It was as tall as an elephant and its spiked tail, longer than its body, waved back and forth like a viper ready to strike. It sighed, revealing row upon row of dagger like fangs. Clouds of steam billowed from its flared nostrils. Despite the heat, Ethan felt ice run through his veins. Yet, he stood tall and looked the dragon dead in the eye.



For a time nothing was said. But as the boy and the dragon each silently regarded the other, all was fully understood.

> At last the dragon bowed deeply and Ethan returned the gesture. Then with a great sweeping of wings that practically

knocked the young man off his feet, the beast lifted, turned, and flew east through a cloud of dust into the evening. Ethan watched the dragon until it was but a dot in the sky and then not even a dot.

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The king swayed and collapsed on the ground.



than woke to the sun shining in his eyes. Dazed, the young man lay on his back for some time until the previous day's events came suddenly flooding into his memory. Sitting up, he looked around.

There was no sign of the dragon. However, his arms and legs were indeed a wondrously shimmering green without a trace of burnt flesh, and he marveled for several minutes at the way his new skin reflected the morning light. Although his body ached from head to toe, he found it miraculous that he had not broken a single bone in the fall. His lips were cracked and bleeding from intense thirst, but after stumbling about, he at last found his water flask and emptied it voraciously into his parched mouth. Ethan thought it must be the sweetest water he had ever tasted.

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And so he began his descent from off the mountain. It was turning into another beautiful autumn day, and Ethan could not help but feel elated by the sound of a distant woodpecker or by the sight of a chipmunk scurrying across his path. It seemed to him that he was no longer walking but floating, carried by the early breeze which whispered secrets in his ears and swept the hair from off his forehead. He burst out laughing; all his fear and worry had vanished leaving nothing but a light and easy peacefulness. (song "All the Blue" page 58)

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At last Ethan reached the base of the mountain, emerging exhausted from out of the forest and into a clearing. As he did, he heard the shouts of waiting townspeople running towards him. Yet, they approached only to stop, one after another, looking bewildered and cautious, until the whole crowd stood gathered staring at him. Ethan's skin glistened like emeralds in the sunlight and he became suddenly aware of how he must look covered in soot, dragon's blood and green scales.

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"It's alright," he called. "I'm alright."

Slowly they began to approach until many were bowing at his feet. Children touched his skin with awed curiosity whispering, "It's dragon armor."

Dawning recognition spread from face to face, whispers turned into cheering. The crowd grew louder and louder until it became one voice singing:

"The deadly beast has gone!"

"Ethan fought the fire and won!"

"The deadly beast has gone!"

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"Ethan fought the fire and won!"

The swelling crowd lifted the king onto their shoulders, Ethan laughing as he was bounced and carried about, his citizens dancing to the rhythm of their own jubilant song.

Then Ethan saw her, the Queen Mother, walking proudly towards him, smiling, her eyes brimming with tears. Ethan was lowered to the ground as the crowd parted and bowed to Her Majesty.

Forgetting all formality, Ethan rushed to Sarah and fell into her waiting arms. She held fast to her son, her hands slightly trembling. For at that moment, nothing else mattered; he was home.

And the words of the dragon echoed in Ethan's ears, "No task lies before you so dreadful that you shall not master it."

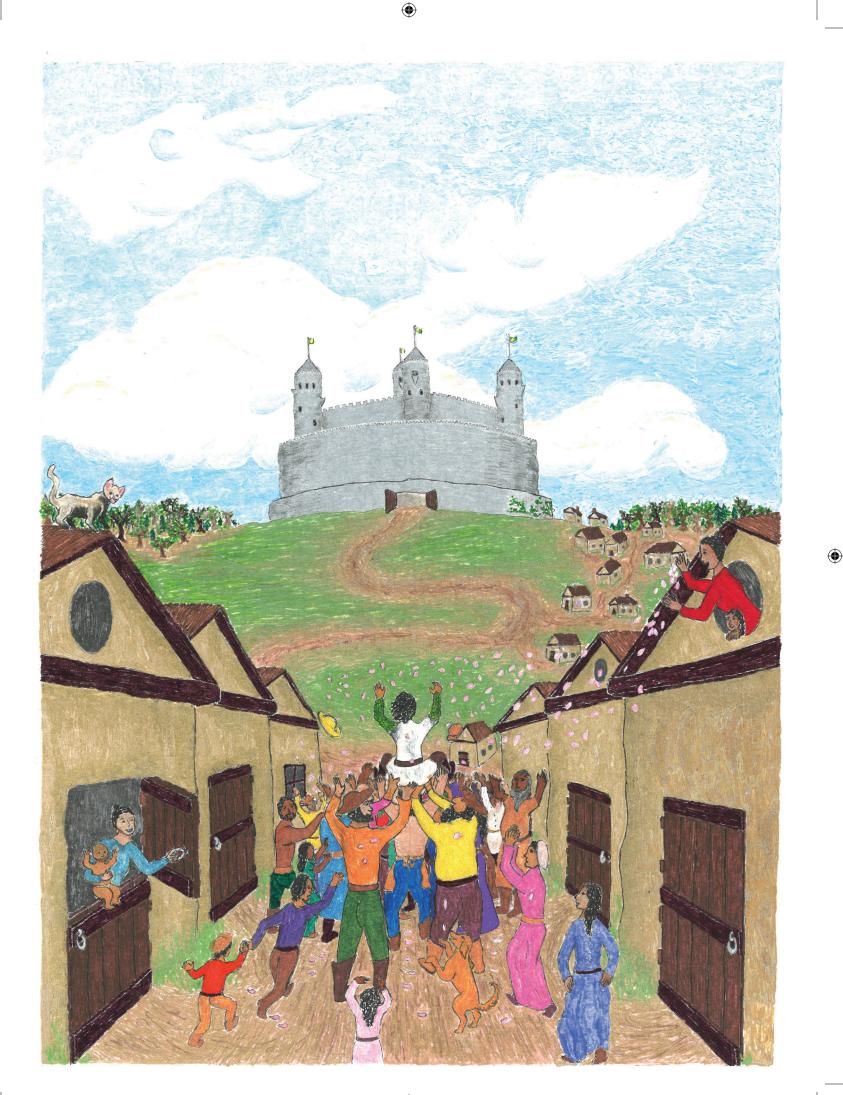
The king turned to his mother and exclaimed, "I did exactly as you told me; I saw myself defeating the dragon! I knew that I could—that I must—some how, some way. And so I did, Mother, I did!"

For a time, nothing was said as Sarah beamed back at her son, her fingers softly combing his hair. But as each silently regarded the other, all was fully understood.

And looking deeply into Ethan's eyes, Sarah gently replied, "Yes, my son. Yes, you did." (song "He's Green" page 60)



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Lend Your Ear

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(Townspeople sing)

Lend your ear hear the glorious story of valorous deeds of marvelous King Ethan! If you dare it's a whale of a, tale of a fable sublime, if you take time to listen! We would be lost, a boat that is tossed about the sea. But, lo and behold, our hero heard our urgent plea. When the winds are changing, still your kite can rise. Pull your dreams up to the sky!

Lend your ear— Hear the incredible parable of terrible, beastly battles and feats of Ethan!

Be prepared
for an endeavor so clever that
ever was told, that you really won't believe it!
If we were to walk a mile all laced up in his shoes,
(If we only knew!)
we'd shout out aloud about his inner fortitude!
(So true!)
When you see your shadow
(and you're terrified,)
there's no need to run
(to find a place to hide.)
Simply turn and greet the sun.
(There is one you can rely on!)
Ethan, fabulous Ethan!

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Ethan, admirable Ethan! Ethan, spectacular Ethan! Ethan, fantastical Ethan!

So with our recounting, (we aspire!) We hope our tale inspires (when times are dire) should you find you fear the fire! (We recall through all our trials—)

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Ethan, fabulous Ethan! Ethan, admirable Ethan! Ethan, spectacular Ethan! Ethan, fantastical Ethan! Ethan, fabulous Ethan! (Ethan, Ethan, incredibly clever, exceptional, invaluable!) Ethan, admirable Ethan! (Ethan, Ethan, amazingly brave, sensational, unbeatable!) Ethan, spectacular Ethan! (Ethan, Ethan, astoundingly just and generous, miraculous!) Ethan, fantastical Ethan! (Ethan, Ethan, remarkably wise and wonderful, marvelous!)

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Lend your ear hear the glorious story of— If you dare, it's a whale of a, tale of a— Lend your ear hear the glorious story of!

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Queen Sarah's Lullaby

(Queen Sarah sings)

I have faith the stars will shine and light the way until the sun should rise. And this too is true, I have faith in you. See how wise the birds that fly. They know where to go when winter's drawing nigh. And so wise are you when you seek your truth. So, may your steps be long to lead you far, keep you from harm. And may they never stray if darkness ever threatens day 'til once again I find you in my arms. See the trees grow tall and strong and they stand upright amidst the turbulent storm. This same courage too is rooted deep in you. So, may your aim be high and certain as the arrow flies. And may your eyes be kind to see their tears when others cry though different we may seem, still we are one.

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And faith will keep you, wisdom teach you, courage lead you; love will see you home.

Anything Is Possible

(Ethan sings)

I could follow in his shadow, known as only Edward's son, trod until my wheels run deep into the road. Or I could charter unknown waters, point my compass where I want to go into the unknown. Every day there's a way where anything is possible. Come what may, it's okay— I'll see it through, I'm sure to. What's been done's now long gone and anything is possible. If I'm down on the ground I can still climb the mountain. I'll stand back up and try again.

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Will it be a grand adventure,will the hero save the day?I'm the teller of this tale, I'll have my say.I can pen a happy endingno matter who or what may come my way.My mind has been made.

'Cause every day there's a way where anything is possible. Come what may, it's okay— I'll see it through, I'm sure to. What's been done's now long gone and anything is possible. If I'm down on the ground I can still climb the mountain. I'll stand back up and try again.

No matter how or where the wind will blow, I'm still the billow for my own sail. I will prevail!

'Cause every day there's a way where anything is possible. Come what may, it's okay— I'll see it through, I'm sure to.

What's been done's now long gone and anything is possible. If I'm down on the ground I can still climb the mountain. I'll stand back up and I'll get right up and try again.

Time to Decide

(Dragon sings)

You've no idea with whom you're dealing; I'm more dreadful than your darkest imaginings!

It's not a game that you can win. So, run away while you still can, little boy, little boy! With one breath of red hot flame you'll crackle up like kindling, little boy, little boy! With all due respect young man, if you play the fool then a dragon must do what a dragon must do the price for putting up with you.

(Ethan sings)

Annoy me, little pestering fly; (I did not come to cower.) I'll squash you 'for you bat an eye, little boy, (I can't wait forever;) little boy! (It's now or never!) You're flirting with a hurricane; (The sharpness of my blade) I'll leave you drowning in my wake, little boy, (must find a way,) little boy! (make no mistake.) Listen closely, child, for a word of advice. Choose your escape or meet your demise; I'm getting bored with playing nice. (I can't afford to lose this fight!)

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Time to decide (Time to decide) who will win, who will die. (who will win, who will die.) There'll be just one left standing; (There'll be just one left standing;) your will will bend to mine. (your will will bend to mine.)

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You underestimate my power to survive. (You underestimate my power to survive.) Watch how I cut you down to size! (Watch how I cut you down to size!)

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"No mercy" is the dragon's creed (Must keep my wits about me—) lest he be felled by his enemies, little boy, (with lightning speed) little boy! (I must slay this beast!) A ruthless monster I've become; (So lonely on this mountain—) I fly alone and care for none, little boy, (no friend to count on) little boy! (or help to call on!)

Time to decide (Time to decide) who will win, who will die. (who will win, who will die.) There'll be just one left standing; (There'll be just one left standing;) your will will bend to mine. (your will will bend to mine.) You underestimate my power to survive. (You underestimate my power to survive.)

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Watch how I cut you down to size! (Watch how I cut you down to size!) You don't respect the one you do not understand. (Your eyes are blinded by what you think I am.) No matter how or where it all began— (No matter how or where it all began—) I promise, you'll respect me in the end! (I promise, you'll respect me in the end!) Time to decide (Time to decide) who will win, who will die. (who will win, who will die.) There'll be just one left standing; (There'll be just one left standing;) your will will bend to mine. (Your will will bend to mine.) You underestimate my power to survive. (You underestimate my power to survive.) Watch how I cut you down to size! (Watch how I cut you down to size!) No matter what may come, I know I'll stay alive. (No matter what may come, I know I'll stay alive.) Watch how I cut you down to size! (Watch how I cut you down to size!)

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All The Blue

(Ethan sings)

It's never looked like this before; how could I have missed it? It's perfectly blissful this day! What should I say? How can I explain when never before have I felt quite this way? The grass has never seemed so green, pines never smelled so fresh, so clean. Whistling wind, warbling birds music like I've never heard or understood. I can't deny how mesmerized I find myself today in the oddest sort of way. I am inclined to think the planets have aligned to create the most exquisite kind of day. Could it be me that things should look so different?

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the simple seems magnificent!
 Extraordinary!
 How quite contrary—
 that I'm alive!

Suddenly,

How quite contrary that I'm alive! Finally I recognize how lucky am I

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that I'm alive! Suddenly I've opened up my eyes to all the blue in the sky.

Could it be me or does the sun shine now more radiant? And all I see has become more clear and evident and not so ordinary. How quite contrary—

that I'm alive! Finally I recognize how lucky am I that I'm alive! Suddenly I've opened up my eyes.

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I'm alive! Never knew that I could feel this fine. I'm alive! Suddenly I've opened up my eyes To all the blue To all the blue To all the blue in the sky!

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He's Green

(Townspeople sing)

Some say seeing is believing, but we believed when sight was fleeting. This wonderful feeling, our king is returning! See he shimmers like an emerald, like the gems upon his crown. Its logic confounding, this sight so astounding! He's green, he's green the most beautiful green we've ever seen! All hail the King!

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Bow to Ethan, the boy who braved the beast! He's green, he's green! Let us sing of his wise and mighty deeds. He reigns supreme! Hail to Ethan, our fair and faithful king!

(Queen Sarah sings)

Here at the journey's end a long hard road with twists and bends. While what you sought to find you carried with you all the time and like a lantern led you home again.

(Townspeople sing)

It's logic confounding, this sight so astounding! This wonderful feeling, our king at last returning a marvel, a miracle, amazingly incredible! Hear us testify 'til no one can deny the courage and power that was forged in the fire! He's green, he's green the most beautiful green we've ever seen! All hail the king! Bow to Ethan, the boy who braved the beast!

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He's green, he's green! Let us sing of his wise and mighty deeds! He reigns supreme! Hail to Ethan, our fair and faithful king!

(Queen Sarah sings)

And faith will keep you, wisdom teach you, courage lead you; love will see you.

Faith will keep you, wisdom teach you, courage lead you, love will see you love will see you love will see you home!

(Townspeople sing)

He's green! He's green! He reigns supreme! Hail to Ethan: fair and faithful, wise and mighty king!

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Can You Discover?

Johanna, the illustrator, chose to leave tiny details in her drawings like those she admires in many medieval illuminated manuscripts. She would like to see if you can find the following:

- a dog
- three shields
- a yellow hat
- two swords
- a horse and a cart
- five door handles
- man with a straw hat
- the dragon's wound
- woman throwing rose petals
- There are four constellations hidden in the "Night Sky" border. Can you find them? What are the myths behind each constellation and how might they relate to Ethan's story? (A hint: Orion, Hercules, Pegasus and Virgo constellations.)

- two birds
- a baby
- four dragons
- five flags
- four Ethans
- two skulls
- a rat
- a cat

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Can you locate the castle tower that holds Ethan's bedroom on page 47? (Look at the picture on page 20 for your clue.)

Johanna has studied medieval history and thought she'd share some of what she learned about the symbology of heraldry in her drawings of the shields.

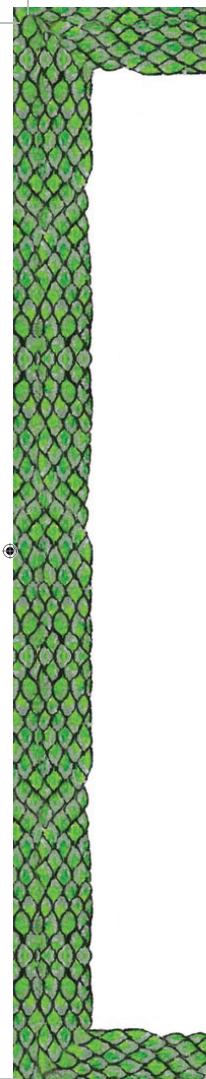
The shield in the "Flowering Vines" border is a kite shield but also called a Fess shield because of its symbology: the horizontal stripe (honor and readiness to serve the public), the indented line across it (fire), the color purple (justice, sovereignty, regality), and silver (sincerity).

The shield in the illustration "The Cave" is also a kite shield: horizontal stripe (honor), vertical stripe (military strength), red (warrior, martyr, military strength), and white (sincerity, peace, purity).

The shield in the "Burnt Vines" border is a kite shield as well: its colors—orange (worthwhile ambition) and gold (generosity).

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Row about your shield, your sword, or your crown?

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Use this page to draw your picture



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Special Thanks!

Tommy Doerfler Tricia Drake Robin Engel Juliana Ericson Elizabeth Finnegan Jeff Goddard, Jasmine Krnjetin, Luka and Hannah Kawal Grover Sarah Hewett Robert and Frances Hogg Jackson-Holleman Family Chuck and Tonya Jagoe Burt and Evelyn Johnson Will Ketchum Birgit Krabbe Grant Marquardt Thomas Mauldin-Roles and his dad Trudy McKnight Mike Millard Sharon Muse Bill and Polly Scrantom James, Sue and Lucy Shattuck Sue Terry Robin Tucker Nicola, Debra and Valentina Vidali Laura Volk Ben Jamin Walker Summer Zachary

Praise for The Dragon King

"Courage, responsibility, and dependability are character traits that every parent wishes for their child. As a mother and a licensed therapist, I highly recommend *The Dragon King* as a must read." —Sandy O'Donnell, LPC, MHSP, Nashville, TN

"I loved it! I wanna give you a hundred hugs for it. I'm definitely adding it to my list of favorite books." —*Kiley, age 10, Cuenca, Ecuador*

"This beautiful story, chronicling courage and honor in the face of adversity, will intrigue and inspire children of all ages as courageous valor triumphs over fear."

-Reed Powell Christian, MAT, Parent, Teacher, Theater Instructor, Atlanta, Georgia

"I liked it. It was about you can do it. Sometimes you think you can't inside, but you can. Made me feel like I can do things; even if I think I can't, I can. I feel stronger. Thank you." —*Gabriel, age 9, Los Angeles, CA*

"What a beautiful book! The voice is lovely, the illustrations are gorgeously detailed, and the story itself is inspiring."

-Marsha Lanier, MSW, San Francisco, CA

"I thoroughly enjoyed listening to *The Dragon King!* It is charming, interesting, and refreshing. The music is tremendous!" —Juliana Ericson, Holistic Life Coach, Nashville, TN

"My 8-year-old daughter Abbie and I listened to *The Dragon King* during a recent 8-hour drive. As soon as it ended, she asked to hear it again and, since she was holding the laptop, kept replaying the music *Mirsten Schmitt, Winston-Salem, NC*

"A beautiful story of courage and facing one's fears. Wonderful artwork throughout this engaging story makes it as much of a joy to look at as it is to read." —*Audrey Patrick, MA, Nashville, TN*