

BE INSPIRED!

Poetry

New Junior Cycle English
1st Year

Princes Come to Those Who Wait (but you've never been the waiting type)

Dave Rudden

Three kicks tell you there's no breaking the door
Counting guards' steps with an ear to the floor
You don't know how you got here but that mystery can wait
Questions come *after* you've escaped your fate

Consider the problem.

Consider it cold.

You're a practical sort for a nine-year-old.

Hairpins are lockpicks, you learned that from your mum
Carefully held between finger and thumb
The trick is to imagine the lock as a puzzle,
A riddle, a conundrum meant to befuzzle

You don't *pick*.

You *convince*.

You argue aside the tumblers and pins

There. A click – you're out in the hall

And Guard No. 1 is frightfully tall

He looks like a troll that's been inexpertly shaved

Eight feet of scars and rusted chain mail

Your aunt Sophistra taught you to dance

You pirouette past the guard's grasping hands

Be light. Be grace. Be fog. Be air.

His blade passes so close it ruffles your hair

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He's huge. You're tiny. He's heavy. You're light.
When fighting is failure you find new ways to fight
He has none of your speed. You have none of his brawn.
You're already running. You can't lose if you're gone.

(It was Sophistra's first rule and now it is yours
The world is unkind to brave little girls)

Down staircase, down hallways, your feet ring on stone
The guard is pursuing and he's not alone
They've littered the path to the exit with traps
Crossbows unload with a chorus of snaps

There is every chance that any moment you'll die.
And you can't help it – you're beginning to smile.
This is the life for which you've been trained
Nothing ventured, nothing reigned

Your pursuers are sprinting, they're closing the gap
You trip every wire and spring every trap
One meets the other with unpleasant noises
(The guards now regret their recent life choices)

That was the point where you should have run
Your jailors defeated – your freedom was won
Gracious in victory, that's what you've been taught
You should have left instead of stopping to taunt

Because turning the corner is a lumbering beast
Its warts glistening as if they've been greased
It turns out you did the guard a disservice
Real trolls are bigger and far more ferocious

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It starts to charge ... but then blinks in confusion
There's six guards laid out with cuts and contusions
And standing in front is a nine-year-old girl
Without so much as an out-of-place curl

He considers his chances.
You think about yours.
He gives you a quick bow, and opens the door.

You thank the troll politely, and leave his abode
Trading your prison for the open road
When suddenly you hear the clatter of hooves
And a voice calls out, strident and smooth

'WORRY NOT, MILADY, IT IS I, A PRINCE,
COME TO SLAY THESE DREAD DENIZENS
YOUR WORRIES ARE OVER, YOUR STRIFE IS UNSTRIFED
I'LL DEFEAT YOUR CAPTORS AND MAKE YOU MY W- oh.'

You look up. He looks down.
You're both wearing frowns.
Disappointment shrivels his face.
'Are you a princess?
Is this the right place?'

'Yes, and yes,' you say with a grin,
'But I'm actually out, so there's no need to go in.
There's a troll in there. It'd be bad for your health.
Rule One – the best princesses rescue themselves.'