

# A CLUMSY DRAGON ©

A gift to inspire reading from Author Rick Tobin

Periwinkle was the world's clumsiest dragon. Everyone told him so. Other dragons laughed at him. Periwinkle was sad. Periwinkle wanted to run, fly and snort fire like all the other little dragons, but he just could not. His mother, Fire Moth, told him he was wonderful. His father, the mighty Sun Burst, was the greatest among all the dragons in the world. He loved Periwinkle, too. But Sun Burst could not help Periwinkle. Periwinkle could not fly. Periwinkle could not spit fire. Periwinkle just liked to sniff at the fruit in the trees.

One day, Periwinkle kept falling over his tail, as he ran through the apple trees. He was so frustrated. He stamped his little dragon feet on the ground. When he did, some apples popped off the branches. Some hit him on his scaly head.

"Oooo," whimpered little Periwinkle. "I'll show you!"

Periwinkle rolled the apples on the ground toward him using his green, shiny tail. The rustle of his spines made funny clicking sounds along the rocks under the apple trees. Soon Periwinkle had a pile of 10, then 20, then 30 apples!

"I'll teach you not to fall on me," he said to the pile of red, juicy fruit.

Periwinkle loved to throw little rocks. He had no one else to play with, so he had become very good at throwing stones high in the air. He began to do the same with the apples. He threw seven in the air, but they were not like the rocks that flew far away. No, they were heavier, and they began to fall back on Periwinkle's head.

"Ooooooooo...no, no, no," he yelled, as a tiny snort of fire came out of his nose. That had never happened before when he tried to make a spark for his Mother and Father. But he barely noticed as the second apple hit him--**and there were five more coming!**

The tiny dragon tried to save himself by throwing the next apple to reach him back up into the air, but not quite as high. He was getting a little tired. Then he threw the next one up, and the next. Each time he threw them up a little lower. Before he knew what he had done, Periwinkle found himself juggling fruit. He did not know it, but no dragon had ever juggled fruit before. In fact, no dragon had ever juggled anything...**ever!**

Periwinkle spent each afternoon for a week learning his new way of playing. There were plenty of apples everywhere around the orchard. Dragons did not eat apples. No one ate apples. Nobody liked the way they tasted. Periwinkle had tried to eat one once and became sick. Sun Burst just laughed at him, but his Mother had scolded him for doing such a silly thing. "You might as well have been eating rocks," she had told him.

As Periwinkle learned to juggle he would drop an apple now and then, especially when he would try something new, like juggling with his eyes closed, or turning around quickly. This would irritate him. He suddenly found that if he dropped an apple, more and more fire would come out of his nose. This was wonderful! He did not tell anyone



## A CLUMSY DRAGON ©

A gift to inspire reading from Author Rick Tobin

what he had been doing, and by the end of a week, he was snorting out so much flame that he almost set a tree on fire. Instead, he accidentally cooked a pile of the apples he was using to juggle.

Periwinkle sniffed at the apple pile. It smelled very different than the apples on the tree. "This might be bad," he said to the apples, which were oozing and roasting below him. He sniffed again. The aroma was very interesting, not like the fish Fire Moth brought from the sea. Not like the meat Sun Burst brought from the mountains. Periwinkle took a little lick at the sweet liquid coming from the pile of scorched fruit. He smiled, and snorted a little flame. IT WAS DELICIOUS!

Not only could he juggle. Not only could he make fire. Periwinkle could now cook, and he could cook a wonderful new thing that no dragon had ever eaten before. He was very proud of himself. He played, rolled, juggled and ate until it was time to go home. But he could not eat supper for he was full of apples. Fire Moth was concerned. She sniffed at his nose.

"Have you been eating something strange again?" she asked.

"Oh, Mom," said Periwinkle.

Sun Burst suddenly rushed into the cave where they lived. He was nervous and fidgety.

"Dear, what is it?" asked Fire Moth.

"Tomorrow," replied Sun Burst, "The giant is coming to the canyons. He wants a gift of some kind from us or we have to leave his land. HIS LAND!" yelled Sun Burst. The cave walls shuddered under his voice and smoke from his nose filled their home.

"What shall we do?" asked Fire Moth, and she and Periwinkle hugged Sun Burst in fear.

Ballus the giant was good as his word. He arrived early the next morning to send the community of dragons away unless they could somehow please him. Sun Burst brought the feathers of the rare Rainbow Bird. Sulfur Eye brought a piece of coal that forever burns. Red Flame brought a rare emerald as big as a boulder. It flickered green sparks all over the dragon canyon. Soon the giant had a mound of wonderful treasures before him. But he was not satisfied.

"I have seen these things and many more," bellowed the giant. "I will give you one more chance. Have you nothing to give me to prove I should let you stay in MY canyon?"

None of the great dragon lords answered. None of the dragon ladies answered. None of the dragon children said a word. No one had anything to offer. No one except Periwinkle.



## A CLUMSY DRAGON ©

A gift to inspire reading from Author Rick Tobin

"I have something," he squeaked.

The giant laughed heartily. Sun Burst and Fire Moth tried to pull him back behind them knowing that the giant might strike their only baby. But Periwinkle wriggled free.

"You...you giant...if you follow me I will show you something no one has ever seen before."

"Ha," said the giant. "If this is true, I will not only give you this canyon, but three more like it, forever. But if you are lying, you will all have to move today. No waiting!" Ballus smiled because he knew he would have the canyon back for himself.

All the dragon families and Ballus followed Periwinkle as he tripped and stumbled his way to the apple orchard. Ballus and the grown dragons had some difficulty walking around all the trees, but soon they were at an open field. They watched as Periwinkle gathered up a pile of bright, red crisp apples.

"Oh, dear," Fire Moth whispered to Sun Burst. "Oh, dear."

It was very quiet. A few of the little dragons whispered and giggled at Periwinkle. Periwinkle the Clumsy.

"Well!" shouted the giant.

And then Periwinkle began. One after another he threw seven apples high in the air. One almost hit the giant's nose. Soon there were seven more, and seven more, and more, and more. Within minutes the sky was filled with apples flying like flower petals in the wind, all being swirled and twirled by the little dragon's hands, wings, tail and feet. It was wondrous. The dragons all gasped, especially Fire Moth and Sun Burst. Periwinkle could see his father smile in a way he had never seen before. Sun Burst gave Fire Moth a hug and wrapped his wings around her shoulders.

"Enough!" commanded the giant. "This is why you take Ballus to the trees? I have jugglers in my castle that can do this, and not with those stinking apples. Nobody likes them! They taste awful."

No sooner did Ballus speak than the apples fell to the ground in a perfect circle, stacked all on top of themselves. A blast of heat and orange flame roared out of Periwinkle. Even the giant backed away. The sounds of "oohs" and "aahs" came from the crowd of dragons.

"And now, giant, come close if you dare for the surprise of your life."

"Humph humph," mumbled Ballus.



## A CLUMSY DRAGON ©

A gift to inspire reading from Author Rick Tobin

Periwinkle whisked the smoke and fire off of the pile of juicy apples. He dug through to the spot he knew would have the best tasting ones. "Here, I dare you to eat this!" Periwinkle shouted in his little, mousy voice.

Ballus hesitated and then took the fresh cooked fruit from the tiny clawed hand. He put it in his mouth. The dragons held their breath. Ballus said nothing for a while. Then he reached down into the pile and swept it up to his mouth. A great laugh came from his belly once he had swallowed it all up. The trees shook. Small rocks rolled down from the canyon walls.

"A baby dragon," he laughed, "that juggles fruit. Ha, and makes apples into delicious food. More than enough," Ballus shouted. "The canyons are yours...but you must teach me how to make this wonderful new thing."

"Of course," said Sun Burst. "Absolutely," said Fire Moth. "Maybe," said Periwinkle.

All of the dragons shuddered. One moment they had new canyons. Now Periwinkle might anger Ballus and they would loose everything.

"Oh," said Ballus. "Only maybe? Tell me, what else do you want besides three canyons oh little cook of the dragons?"

Periwinkle could not run up close enough to the mighty giant and in frustration he found himself flying...for the first time ever. He slipped and began falling, but the giant caught him in his huge, hairy hand. "I want," said Periwinkle, "I want you to come and play with me."

The sky was still. Everyone, including the giant, was absolutely still. Sun Burst held his breath, wondering how he could save Periwinkle when Ballus decided to crush him, for he had a horrible temper. But there was no anger. No, there was rain--cascades of flowing giant tears. No one had ever asked Ballus to play with him, even when he was a young giant. The other giants called him clumsy and left him alone to play by himself.

And so it was. Periwinkle grew to become the great king of the dragons. Ballus became the wise king of the giants. Cooked apples became a favorite food of both. And, to this day, when you hear the thunder rolling down the canyons from some far off mountain know that it may be Periwinkle and Ballus juggling and cooking with their favorite fruit...apples. For there, in the apple orchard, are the clumsy dragon and the lonely giant playing together--no longer clumsy and never again lonely.

