

Brave to be Scared – Pix's character arc

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Writing exercise

Scared → brave → reckless → scared again → heroic

One day a Knight appears in a old fort, the knight calls himself the Dread Knight and claims the fort and all the lands around it for itself. The surrounding towns try to resist but the Knight is strong and most of the champions are quickly defeated.

Pix is a small girl from the town of greenrise, it's people are mostly old timers and weary adventures who have put down their swords. Pix is the hero of the story, but she doesn't think of herself as a hero. She is a nervous pre-teen who is afraid of the dark, spiders, fire, and even her own shadow.

Yet she is the chosen champion of her local village, because she is the only young person left. So together with Caz, her pet squirrel, she is forcibly sent out to save their town greenrise from the Dread Knight.

Pix is burdened with the fate of her small village and these pressures grow as more and more heroes of other villages are defeated by the Dread Knight one by one.

Pix is scared as she travels through wild forests and deep canyons. She prefers to hide and sneak past her foes instead of trying to fight them. She runs away from even the smallest creatures, and hides behind rocks when she hears a sound she doesn't know.

Her quest takes her to the entrance of brittlerock cave, a eery chasm in the dark of the forrest. Pix can't see anything inside and runs out back towards the light whenever she walks into a wall, loses her footing, or thinks something will get her.

She spends days running in and out of the cave to the point that she knows every rock inside. Finally she manages to get all the way to the exit on the other side, but in her euphoria she runs into a web spread across the exit. She is caught in the web of the bone spider, and barely escapes it's maws by using the web against itself, letting the spider bite her own web and free Pix.

With newfound confidence she starts to grow bolder. She wins some fights and is hailed as a hero by those she saves. But these cheers quickly go to her head, she takes on dangerous enemies and overextends herself. In one such fight she battles a blue dragon from the melted castle on lake. Where once fire would scare her now she pays it no mind. Pix manages to avoid it's sharp talons but it's fire is hot and burns one of her arms. She should have been more careful. Even Caz's fur smolders and stinks as Pix takes unnecessary risks.

Instead of retreating Pix climbs the remaining tower of the melted castle, with the dragon right behind her. The last tower groans under her weight, the old stone unable to hold the weight of a girl and a dragon. It collapses into the lake taking the girl and the dragon with it. Pix barely survives, but is filled with confidence.

This new confidence becomes her downfall. She becomes reckless and endangers not just herself but her furry friend Caz. She fights her way through the fort instead of sneaking and uses up all her energy taking on the minions of the dread Knight. Things go wrong as her bravery turns into complete recklessness as she runs into the throne room. The Dread Knight laughs at her wounds. Wounds she could've avoided if she was a little less bold. The Dread Knight then brings down his giant mace and before Pix can react the Dread Knight manages to hit Caz in the chest. Caz is knocked off his feet and slammed into the oaken doors of the throne room.

All of Pix's fears come flooding back as the realization dawns on her that she isn't strong enough to fight the Knight, and she runs from the throne room with a barely breathing Caz cradled in her arms. Back in the village the village chief manages to bind Caz's wounds and stabilize his condition, but before anyone can ask what happened the Dread Knight shows up. Ready to finish the job.

But Pix knows what to do, she holds all of the fear she has inside and rather than push it away she uses it. She lures the Dread Knight away from the village into the brittlerock cave. There she approaches the bone spider, and gains its trust. Using its web she weaves a trap for the knight. Then in the dark she makes a fire and uses her shadow to distract the knight luring him into the silken trap. When the knight is caught in its web the spider descends on it and as the knight thrashes in fear Pix follows the spider's web out of the dark cave.

Using her own fears she defeated the Dread Knight, and saved the town. When she arrives back home Caz is there to greet her and a big party is thrown in her honor.

This quick writing exercise was meant to portray a quick character arc for a short film. I wanted it to be circular where this she learned at the start come back to her in the end.