

## The Copper dragon

By Søren Jessen

A statue of a dragon made out of copper, was standing on the town hall square in the city, and looked at all the people passing the square. Every now and then it wondered how it would be to be a human being.

One evening a ladybird landed on the head of the statue, but it didn't move. That's the way it is, if you're a statue. You have to stand still all life, no matter what happens.

The ladybird started to walk around in circles. Suddenly it spread its red wings and flew up into the air.

The statue had never dared to move before, but now it thought: If a small ladybird can do it, I can too.

A glimpse of life came to the eyes of the copper dragon, and they followed the ladybird, until it disappeared. A deep, warm orange glow lit the eyes, and a thin line of smoke stood up from the trunk of the dragon. A dragon with a trunk? Yes – exactly. It was that kind of dragon. It shook its tale and spread its cold, stiff wings.

“No!” one of the other dragons whispered without moving its mouth. “No, no, no! You can't. You mustn't. It's forbidden!”

“Absolutely forbidden,” yelled a bull made of copper standing near by.

“Yes, but I'll do it anyway,” the dragon said, and flapped its wings so violently, that the bolts and screws, that had kept it nailed at the same place for so many years, broke.

It flew upwards and for the first time in its life, it used its wings for what wings are supposed to be used for. It shot along between the houses and felt dizzy from happiness, and warm with joy. The warmth spread from the body to the tip of the trunk where a column of fire flared up.

“I'm free,” the dragon yelled, “absolutely free!” And it didn't care if someone should hear it.

“Look at that fool,” a statue of a knight on a horse yelled. “It really doesn't know how a proper statue should behave.”

“Statues,” a fishermans wife made of granite said, “must stand still all life long. Otherwise they aren't statues anymore.”

“Fine,” the copper dragon laughed. “Then I’m no longer a statue.” It would try to find some people to talk to. They would probably be much nicer.

But the night had fallen over the city, and people were hard to find.

“Stupid me,” the dragon laughed. Every day, all its life, it had watched people hurry along in cars, on bikes, on foot and every evening and night it was surprised that they all disappeared so suddenly. “It’s just because they are inside the houses.”

It flew up to a window and looked inside.

It got a shock. It had always thought, that people would be rushing back and forth and be busy inside the houses, just the way they did when they hurried across the square, but no. They were sitting still and stiff like statues and stared into a little box with blue light coming out of it.

The dragon tapped the window with a sharp copper nail, but the people inside didn’t move. It looked through other windows in other houses. It was the same everywhere.

The dragon was all confused now. It never, for one minute, knew that people and statues had so much in common.

It was a big mystery among statues, what people were doing inside their houses. Now it knew, and it just had to tell somebody.

A huge dome towered above the roofs of the city. It was an enormous church. A church made of marble. A long row of statues encircled the church.

The dragon flew up to one of the green men who stood there on their plinth and looked so noble.

“Did you know,” it said, “that all people turn to statues once they get inside their houses?”

“Nonsense,” snapped one of the statues. “People turn to light, when they go inside.”

“Exactly,” another one said. “Blue light.”

“No, no,” the copper dragon said eagerly. “That blue light comes from a box which all the people sit and watch.”

“Rubbish!” a third one yelled. “Everybody knows, that people can’t stand still for very long.”

The copper dragon sighed. The sour statues were impossible to talk to. They thought they knew everything, but it was obvious, that they never had looked through a window and seen what the dragon had seen.

The night was so still, so quiet. The dragon flew on the wind, thinking about the things it had seen. It tried to tell other statues about it, but none of them wanted to listen and that made it sad.

The dragon landed on a spire, and looked over the city and the world. It didn't know what to do. One thing it knew for sure. It didn't want to sit and stare into a box with blue light every night.

Every now and again it had heard people talk about the sea, and far, far away behind the city it saw the sea blinking like liquid silver in the moonlight. It pushed off from the spire and flew towards the big sea.

When it reached the shore, it settled on a stone to get a rest. The wings were aching and the bag hurt.

"You are such a good flyer," a voice suddenly said. A statue of a little mermaid was sitting on a stone not far away.

"Thank you," said the dragon. "I've been practicing all night."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm on my way to the sea."

"You are also very good at sitting still," the mermaid said after a while.

"Yes, but I have actually been a statue all my life."

"I thought so."

"It's actually quite nice to sit like this," the dragon mumbled.

"I think so too," the little mermaid answered.

"I like to sit on the town hall square and look at people."

"But if you fly out into the world," the little mermaid said, "there will be no more sitting still, don't you think?"

The copper dragon thought deeply about this for a while. Maybe the mermaid was right. The dragon realised, that it was sitting in exactly the same position as it used to do when it was a statue. Suddenly it longed for the lovely town hall square. It flapped its wings and took off from the stone.

"Good luck," the little mermaid said, "but be careful. The ocean is so terribly big."

“I’m not going over the ocean,” the dragon whispered and turned it’s trunk towards the city.

“Good luck anyway.”

The dragon flew over the city, faster than it had ever flown before ...

... and finally settled on its good old spot on the town hall square. It felt a big, warm joy by being back, the moment it landed. It fell into its old position and was happy.

For the rest of its life, the dragon often thought about the night when it was absolutely free. These thoughts kept it warm in the long, cold nights when it was sitting there, overlooking the city. Immovable like any other statue.