The Red Prince

Long ago, in a land far away, there was an island kingdom called Avala, where a king and queen lived. They were much loved by their people and their son, the prince, who was friends with every child on the island.

Early one bright, sunny morning, the prince's parents set off on a grand tour of the mainland and left the young prince in charge. As they set sail, dark, stormy clouds rolled over the island and snow began to fall steadily. A great storm was setting in. The Avalans shut their door and lit their fires so they could keep the bitter wind out. Almost no one saw the black ships that sailed into the harbour. Sadly, they didn't notice the stranger who leapt ashore, sneaked through the streets, seized the city and captured the unfortunate prince. They took him far away where they hid him in an ancient, monstrous fortress in the heart of the island.

Locked in the dark for days, the prince lost all hope. If only I could get that key so I could escape he thought. Late one evening, the prince had an idea. Terrified because he was trapped, he waited in the corner of the cell whilst constantly watching the guard. As long as the guard fell asleep, he should have a chance of escaping. Whilst the guard was sleeping, he got his trusted dog, Apollo, to steal the keys. Silently, Apollo crept towards the guard, before carefully taking the keys.

As quiet as a mouse, he crept past the sleeping guard before quickly leaving the fortress. The prince dashed as quick as a flash along the narrow, winding road until he reached the hillside. Moments later, the alarm rang out over Alava and

soon the island was crawling with strangers all searching for the little red prince. He stumbled through the snow until he saw the green light of a fire.

A young girl sat beside the flames.

As she looked at the prince, she kindly told him, "You have to get to the city."

"Your friends are waiting for you," she exclaimed.

"But how will I get there?" asked the prince.

Worriedly, he cried, "The strangers are everywhere!"

"Don't worry," she assured him, "you'll find help in the most unexpected places."

As the prince made his way across the island, he found that the girl was right. The Avalans did everything they could to confuse and confound the strangers. The red prince was able to sneak all the way to the city gates. He could hear a great commotion from behind the walls but saw no way past the guards. Suddenly they were distracted and he slipped inside. There he saw something he couldn't believe. All of Avala were dressed as red princes. The city was filled with ruby red and rang with laughter and music. The prince danced through the streets for hours, invisible in a brilliant sea of colour until he left the safety of the vast crowd. The strangers chased him down but the prince was no longer afraid for he knew he was not alone. Running towards the shore, they scrabbled to their boats, rowed to their ship and sailed away from the island of Avala.