

## Bellerophon and Pegasus

What a hideous monster the chimera was! It had the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a snake. Every time it opened its mouth, long flames reached out, burning anything in their way. No wonder everyone in the land was scared of it.

"I must stop this creature frightening my people," said the king. But who would be brave enough to kill such a dangerous beast?

The king thought and thought. Then, "Aha! That's it," he said. "Bring me Bellerophon!"

Bellerophon was the bravest man in the country, but even he started trembling when he heard the king's request.

"How am I supposed to kill the beast all by myself?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the king sourly. "And I don't care, just do it!"

"The only way to kill the Chimera is with magic!" said Bellerophon. So he went to see a wise magician.

"The chimera is indeed a very dangerous creature. No-one who has ever tried to kill it has lived to tell the tale. The only way to kill it is to approach the creature from above."

"If only I could fly," said Bellerophon.

The magician looked thoughtful. "You have no wings," he said, "but I can help you."

"How?" asked Bellerophon.

The magician took a golden bridle from a cupboard.

"In the hills lives a flying horse called Pegasus. He is wild and dangerous, but if you throw this magic bridle over him, you will be able to ride on his back."

"Then I could fly over the chimera and kill it with my spear," said Bellerophon.

He put the bridle over his shoulder and strode off towards the hills.

On the way, he stopped at a village to ask where he would find Pegasus.

"Pegasus - what's that?" asked one man.

"A flying horse!" said another. "Are you mad?"

But a small boy told him, "Every night when the moon is shining brightly, Pegasus lands to drink from a spring in the hills."

"It's true!" said a small girl. "He stays on the ground for a few more seconds, then he's back up in the air, flapping his enormous wings."

Bellerophon found the spring the children had told him about and there hid himself behind a bush. He waited and waited, but there was no sign of Pegasus. Then he heard a flapping of wings. His heart pounded. Was it Pegasus? But no, it was just an eagle! Soon, Bellerophon began to feel sleepier and sleepier until eventually he fell fast asleep.

In the morning, he was woken by the shouts of children.

"Look!" they cried. "Pegasus has been here!"

Bellerophon looked at the hoof prints in the mud. It was true, Pegasus had been there. That night, Bellerophon went without supper so that his hunger would keep him awake. Once more, he waited and waited. Just after midnight, he heard the flapping of wings and the clip clopping of hooves.

He peeped out from behind a bush and his heart missed a beat. In front of him was a magnificent white horse with a silver mane and gigantic wings - Pegasus!

Slowly, Bellerophon crept out from the bush with the magic bridle in his hands. Pegasus pricked up his ears and looked around. Had he heard Bellerophon? The young man crept closer and closer. When he was standing right behind the horse, he raised the magic bridle and threw it around his neck.

Pegasus reared up and pawed the ground, but it was no use. Soon, the magic bridle had done its work. Pegasus settled down and Bellerophon jumped on his back. As they rose up into the air Bellerophon shouted with joy,

It didn't take long to find the chimera's lair, but the monster had heard them coming. It rushed out of its cave howling, with bright, hot flames shooting out of its mouth. Pegasus flew away quickly, neighing loudly. Bellerophon had never seen such a horrid creature.

It was obvious that he would never be able to kill it with his spear alone. He thought hard. There had to be another way. Just then, he saw a lead mine close to the chimera's lair.

"That's it!" he shouted.

He pulled on Pegasus's reins and the horse dived gracefully to the ground.

Quickly, Bellerophon picked up a heavy lump of lead. Then he pulled on the reins again and the horse soared back up into the sky.

"Steady now," Bellerophon said to Pegasus as he stuck the lump of lead onto the end of his spear. He looked down at the chimera pacing up and down in front of his dark cave.

"NOW!" shouted Bellerophon at the top of his voice.

Pegasus dived at full speed towards the chimera, ducking to avoid the burning flames. Bellerophon hurled his spear right into the monster's fiery mouth. Suddenly, the chimera's eyes bulged. The lead had melted in its throat and was poisoning it. The monster fell to the ground - dead at last.

Bellerophon and Pegasus flew off in triumph towards the sun. Now everyone could live in peace and without fear for the rest of their lives.

