

Sir Kaye, The Boy Knight® Series Book One

THE KNIGHTING OF SIR KAYE

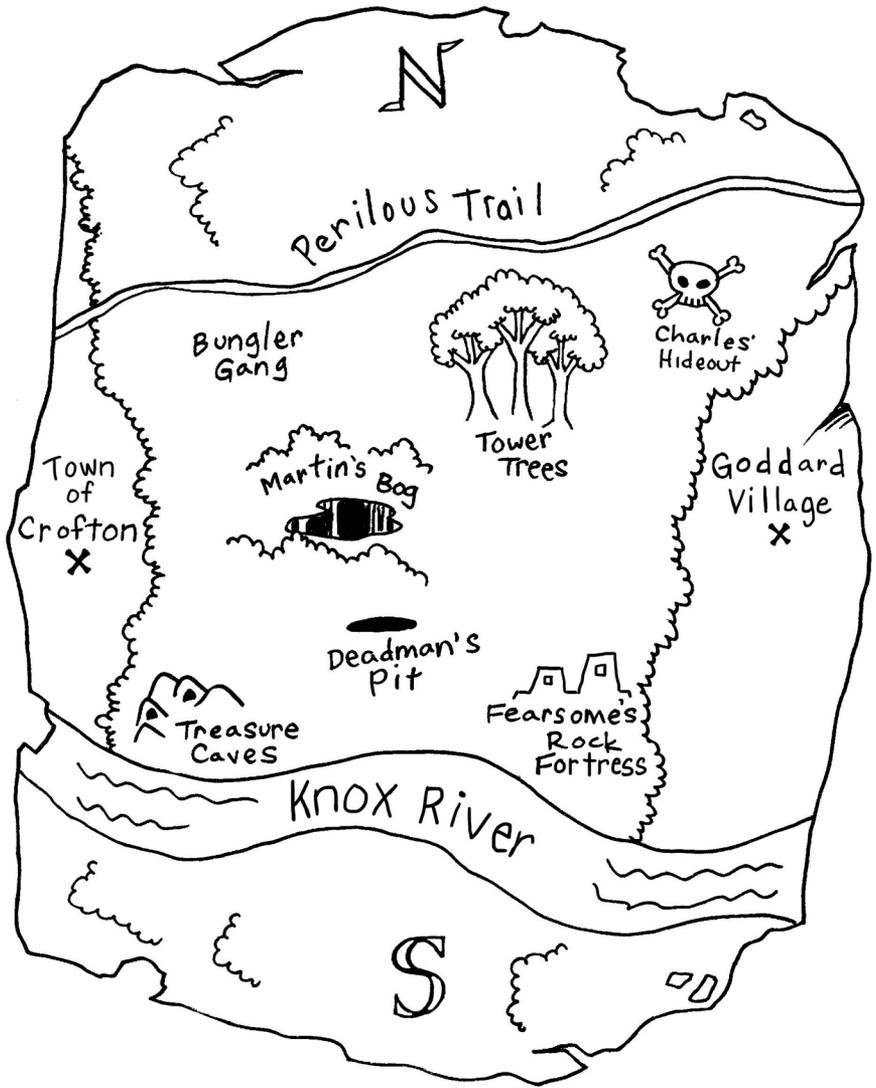
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A Cardboard Box Adventures Book

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map of the knotted woods

*To Elizabeth, without whom this
book would not have been possible.*

The Knighting of Sir Kaye

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Author's Note:

The information I have used to write these stories was first written down by Reginald Stork, royal historian of the kingdom of Knox. When I discovered the records of Sir Kaye's adventures in an ancient and crumbling book from Knox, I thought the stories were so interesting that I wanted to share them with everyone. Therefore, I have changed the language from medieval English to modern English in order to make it easier for people of today to read. I do not think that Reggie would mind. I think he would want everyone to know Kaye's story.

PROLOGUE

Long ago, in the days of the knights, good King Frederic of Knox passed away after a grievous illness that lasted for many years. Sadly, when a king becomes sick and slowly worsens over a long period of time, the same thing may happen to the country he rules. And when a good king dies, it may be that a part of his country dies too.

The part of Knox that sickened and died along with the king was called chivalry. Knights are expected to show chivalry, because that is what makes an ordinary knight become a great knight. A chivalrous knight helps other people and shows honor, courage, respect, kindness, and loyalty through his knightly deeds.

But by the time the king died, most of the knights of Knox had already forgotten what chivalry was.

King Frederic left no children to rule after him, and so his young niece Vianne was forced to become the new queen of a country she had never even seen. At nineteen years old, she packed up her things and left her childhood home in the sunny, song-filled country of Vinland. She moved to a new country full of sad-faced strangers and worthless knights who refused to help her make Knox a country to be proud of.

Despite these troubles, Vianne found unexpected help as she tried to rule her difficult kingdom of Knox. One of her first friends was a boy named Kaye, the youngest knight in the history of Knox, and my best friend. My name is Reginald Stork, and this is our story.

CHAPTER ONE

I slammed the door and rushed out into the crooked streets of the city. Usually I watched where I stepped, because the city streets were dirty with garbage and wandering pigs and terrible-smelling puddles, but today I just ran. I dashed through the twisting maze of dark, narrow alleys until I burst through the gate in the city wall and threw myself down to rest in the shade. Taking deep breaths of the fresh air helped me start to calm down.

I had run out of our house that morning with my father's voice thundering in my ears, saying, "I've had enough of you, Reggie. Get out of my sight. Go work in the fields for two weeks with the peasants. Maybe that will make you grateful for the education I'm trying to give you."

At the same time, my mum had called out, "Be careful, Reggie, and watch out for thieves. They'll bump against you and steal your things. You won't know what's happened until it's too late."

I didn't have anything worth stealing, which made me laugh a little. My mum had a funny habit of warning me to be careful about everything, but she didn't bother me.

It was my father who caused all my trouble. He thought I was mad because he was getting me a new tutor, and I let him

believe that. I hadn't told him about the real problem—my terrible secret. He would never understand.

My father was a wool merchant in the city of Crofton. He bought wool from farmers and shepherds and other people who owned sheep and then he sold the wool to other merchants in Tellingham, an even larger city by the sea. From there the wool was sold to many other countries. Wool from Knox was famous.

My father loved his job. He planned for me to love it too. As a boy, my father had studied in a monastery with monks, and he was grateful for that education, because it made him a better merchant. Now he was going to give me the finest education from the best tutors and after that he was going to teach me the wool business himself. My future was all planned out for me.

Last week my father decided I needed a second tutor right after he learned that a very important man named Arnold Corson was about to come visit him. Arnold was a very powerful man, the head of the wool merchant's guild in Tellingham. If he liked my father, business was good. If he didn't like my father, business wasn't so good.

My father really wanted Arnold to like him, and he always gave Arnold gifts and tried to impress him with stupid things, like paying two fancy tutors to teach his son.

When I complained about having a new tutor, my father was angry. First he threatened to send me away to learn from the monks. Later he decided that hard work in the

fields outside the city would teach me to appreciate the good future and easy life I would have as a wool merchant.

That's why I was now sitting outside the city wall, staring across the fields and thinking about my terrible secret: I hated wool. I never wanted to become a wool merchant.

I liked exploring and collecting things. I liked being where things were happening. I wanted to get away and go somewhere exciting.

The men working in the fields were so far away I could hardly see them. Then I started to grin. That meant that they couldn't see me either. They weren't expecting me. They didn't even know me.

I turned my head to the right. The immense shadows of the Knotted Woods loomed nearby. This gigantic forest stretched across half of Knox. My mum had always warned me that it was full of wild animals and bandits and other dangers. No one had ever told me not to go in there, but I knew that my parents wanted me to stay out of it.

However, I now had two free weeks ahead of me when no one would know where I was, and the Knotted Woods was the perfect place to start exploring. I picked myself up and headed for the edge of the forest.

CHAPTER TWO

The Knotted Woods surprised me. I thought it would be full of dark shadows and wild glowing animal eyes glaring at me through the gloom. I expected pits and traps and snakes and bandits waving knives, but instead, I could hear a stream flowing and birds chirping. Squirrels raced through the tree branches and sunlight fell in patches onto the forest floor. It looked like a friendly place to me.

I decided to start exploring by following the stream so I wouldn't get lost. I followed it for a long time until I came to a clearing in the trees. A long-legged fox sat waiting with his tail wrapped neatly around his feet. He started walking slowly away when he saw me, but then he glanced back at me like he wanted me to follow him. So I did.

That was my first mistake.

The fox started moving faster and faster. Soon I was dodging around tree trunks and jumping over little bushes. Every time I thought I was losing the fox, he'd slow down and let me catch up with him. Then he would speed up again.

We reached another clearing and the fox streaked across it, low to the ground. I was close behind him when he darted under a fallen log, made a sudden sharp turnaround, and dashed back the way we had come. I had already leapt into

the air and was sailing over the log. I couldn't change direction in the air, and I landed with both feet right in the middle of one of the Knotted Woods' most deadly traps—quicksand!

I tried pulling my feet out, but that only made me sink faster and deeper into the murky porridge. Then I tried keeping still. That slowed down the sinking a little bit, but I didn't know what else to try. The forest didn't feel very friendly anymore.

I was afraid to shout for help. If the stories about quicksand in the Knotted Woods were true, then the stories about bloodthirsty bandits were true too. I didn't want any bandits to find me here, because I didn't know what they would do to me. However, I knew exactly what the quicksand would do to me. It would suck me down and bury me. I didn't have any choice. I drew in a deep breath, ready to yell for help as loudly as I could, but as I did so, I glanced to the side.

Peering through the bushes was a very interested-looking, ginger-haired, short-nosed, green-eyed boy about my age. My heart almost jumped out of my chest and landed in the quicksand next to me. All my breath came out in a big whuff.

"Hello. You look like you're in over your head," said the boy.

I wasn't sure if I liked his sense of humor.

"Can't you see I need help?" I cried. "Don't make jokes. Please help me."

"Of course I'll help you. Give me a minute and I'll think of something. Don't go anywhere."

I definitely didn't like his sense of humor.

He put his hand on his pointy chin for a second and said, "I'll need a rope of some sort."

Instead of running off to bring back a rope like a normal person, he reached into a small bag he carried and pulled out two short sticks and some gray yarn. He sat cross-legged on the ground and started knitting.

I hoped he was helping me in some way and hadn't just decided to make himself a new pair of socks, but as I watched him I realized he was knitting incredibly fast. It was amazing. Not many people knew how to knit in Knox. Knitting came from the south countries, but I didn't think anyone anywhere could knit like this.

The quicksand was up to my waist now. I put my hands on top of my head to keep them out of the sand. This boy seemed a little crazy, making terrible jokes and sitting at the edge of a pit of quicksand, knitting away as fast as a squirrel climbs a tree. I didn't really trust him to save my life, but I had no choice.

CHAPTER THREE

“Do you have any brothers or sisters?” the boy asked.

“Um, no,” I said. I wasn’t in the mood for knitting and pleasant conversation. I didn’t want to be polite—I wanted to be rescued.

The boy kept talking. “My sister’s named Meg. She’s six, and she can’t mind her own business. I came here to get away from her. Then I passed Martin’s Bog and found you, and I have a feeling that things will go much better for you than they did for old man Martin.”

“Old man Martin?” I said, with eyes as wide as a barn owl’s eyes.

“Yes. Poor old man Martin died in this bog a long time ago,” he said. “That’s why it’s called Martin’s Bog.”

“AAAAAAAH! Get me out! Get me out now!” I yelled so loud that I sank another inch deeper in the sand.

“Hold on. I’m almost done. This should do it,” he said.

I was stunned to see he had knitted a rope strong enough to pull me out, and just in time. The sand was up to my chest now.

He tied a loop in one end and said, “I don’t mean to *knit*-pick, but before I pull you out, maybe you should tell me your name.”



“Really? You pick terrible times to make your jokes,” I said. “I’m Reggie. Now get me out of here!”

“Nice to meet you, Reggie. My name is Kaye Balfour. Grab the rope and I’ll pull you out,” he said as he threw me the rope.

I caught it and slid the loop under my arms. “Now pull!” I hollered. With every ounce of his strength, Kaye dragged me out of the sludge and I flopped on the ground at his feet, heaving a big sigh of relief.

“Thanks, Kaye,” I said. “I thought I was going to be dinner for worms until you came along. Where did you learn to knit like that?”

Kaye sat down next to me and said, “My grandfather traveled in the south countries a long time ago and learned to knit when he was there. He taught me too, but I don’t like to talk about it.”

“Why not?” I asked. “You’re really fast. And you did save my life with it.”

Kaye shrugged. “I want to be a knight like my father. Knights don’t knit.”

“Who’s your father?” I asked. This was exciting. Knights in Knox might be as dangerous as bandits, but they were still knights. They were the famous people who had the adventures that other people only sang songs and told stories about.

“He’s Sir Henry Balfour,” Kaye said, “and I want to be a knight just like him.”

“Sir Henry Balfour,” I said. “I can’t believe Sir Henry’s son saved my life!”

Sir Henry wasn’t like the other knights. He was a hero. All the boys wanted to be Sir Henry when we pretended to be knights. He was the best knight that ever lived in Knox, except for Sir Gregory, and Sir Gregory was just in old stories. Sir Henry was real. He had ended a war between Knox and the neighboring country of Eldridge and saved hundreds of lives.

“Where is your father? Can I meet him?” I asked.

Kaye shook his head. “No. He’s not here. He’s been gone for almost two years.” He wouldn’t look at me and started throwing twigs into the quicksand.

I didn’t know what to say, but I knew Sir Henry wasn’t dead. I would have heard about that.

“He didn’t just—leave, did he?” I finally asked.

Kaye glared at me. “No! Of course not! The old king sent him away.”

My mouth fell open. “He was banished?” That was almost the worst punishment possible. If the king banished you, you had to leave Knox forever. “Was the king mad at him?”

Kaye sighed and said, “No, Reggie. He’s working with the king of Eldridge. When the old king of Knox got sick, he needed someone he could trust to help keep the peace between the two kingdoms, so he sent my father to Eldridge.”

“Oh,” I said. “That makes sense. Don’t you miss him?”

I wondered if I would miss my father if he was gone for two years. I guessed I would. Maybe.

“I miss him all the time,” Kaye said, “and I miss practicing with him. He was training me to be a knight, and I was going to be his squire.”

“Your own father was teaching you?” I asked. That was unusual. Boys who wanted to be knights usually left home and moved in with another knight’s family to get their training.

“So what if he was?” Kaye said. “He’s a good knight. I learned a lot from him.”

I couldn’t argue with that, so I asked, “How are you training now that he’s gone?”

Kaye looked back down at the ground. “I’m not. He didn’t make any other plans for me. So I help my mum at home and wait for him to come back. I hate that. All the boys in the village laugh at me. They say I’ll never be a knight because I help my mum and they say I’m too scared to fight

because—oh, never mind. It doesn't matter. But you can see why I don't like people to know I can knit."

There was a mystery here, but I didn't ask any more questions. Instead I said, "Well, I won't tell anyone. But with talent like yours, I don't think you can keep it a secret for long."

I needed to leave if I wanted to get home when the field workers finished for the day, but I didn't know where home was.

"Kaye," I said, "do you know how to get to Crofton? I'm lost. I was following a stream, but then I lost that too."

He smiled. "I'll show you how to find it. It's really easy to get lost in these woods. Too bad no one ever made a map of them."

"Wait, Kaye. I have a brilliant idea," I said. "Let's make a map of the woods. We could meet here tomorrow and get started."

"That's perfect! Let's meet here at midmorning. Come on, I'll show you how to get home," Kaye said.

On my way home, I felt excited about the next two weeks. I liked having a new friend to explore with, and I hoped that if Kaye liked me enough, someday I could meet Sir Henry.

When my father saw me, he sniffed at my filthy appearance. "Well, at least you look like you've been working hard. I hope you're beginning to be grateful for the plans I've made for you."

I didn't tell him I had quicksand on me instead of dirt from the fields. He didn't have time to look at me closely,

because when my mother saw me she shrieked, pulled me outside, dumped water on me, and started scrubbing.

“Mum,” I said as she rubbed at my head, “I met Kaye Balfour today. His father is Sir Henry.”

She sloshed another bucket of water over my head and scrubbed at me some more before answering. “So Sir Henry has a son? Well, be nice to that boy. It must be hard to be the son of a famous knight.”

“Mum! Of course I’ll be nice to him. I want us to be friends.”

“I’m glad. Just remember that the best way to have a good friend is to be a good friend,” she said as she handed me a towel and went back inside.

I wanted to be a good friend, but I was afraid that wasn’t enough. Kaye was a knight’s son, and I wasn’t sure if I was interesting enough to be his friend. I decided I had to do something about that.