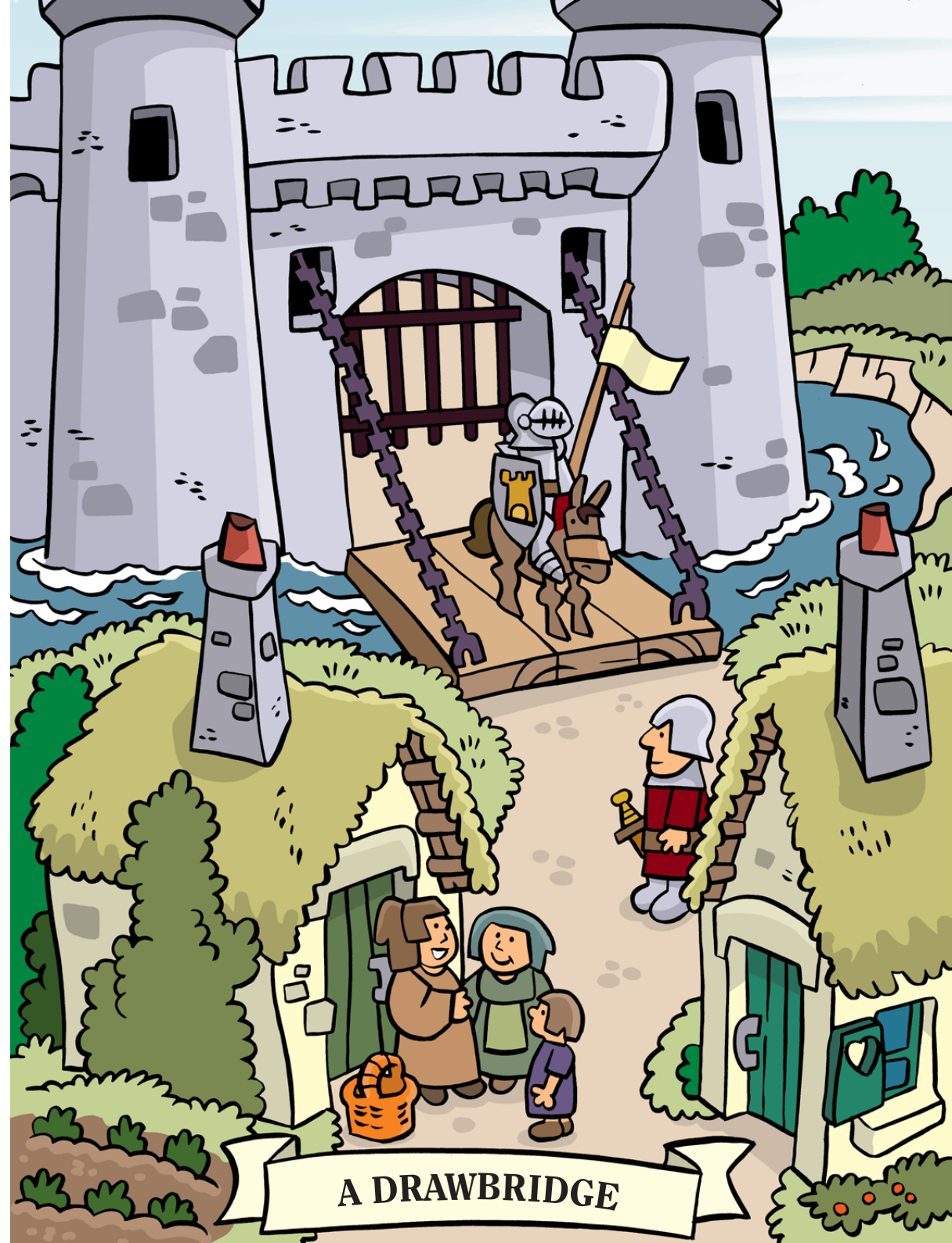


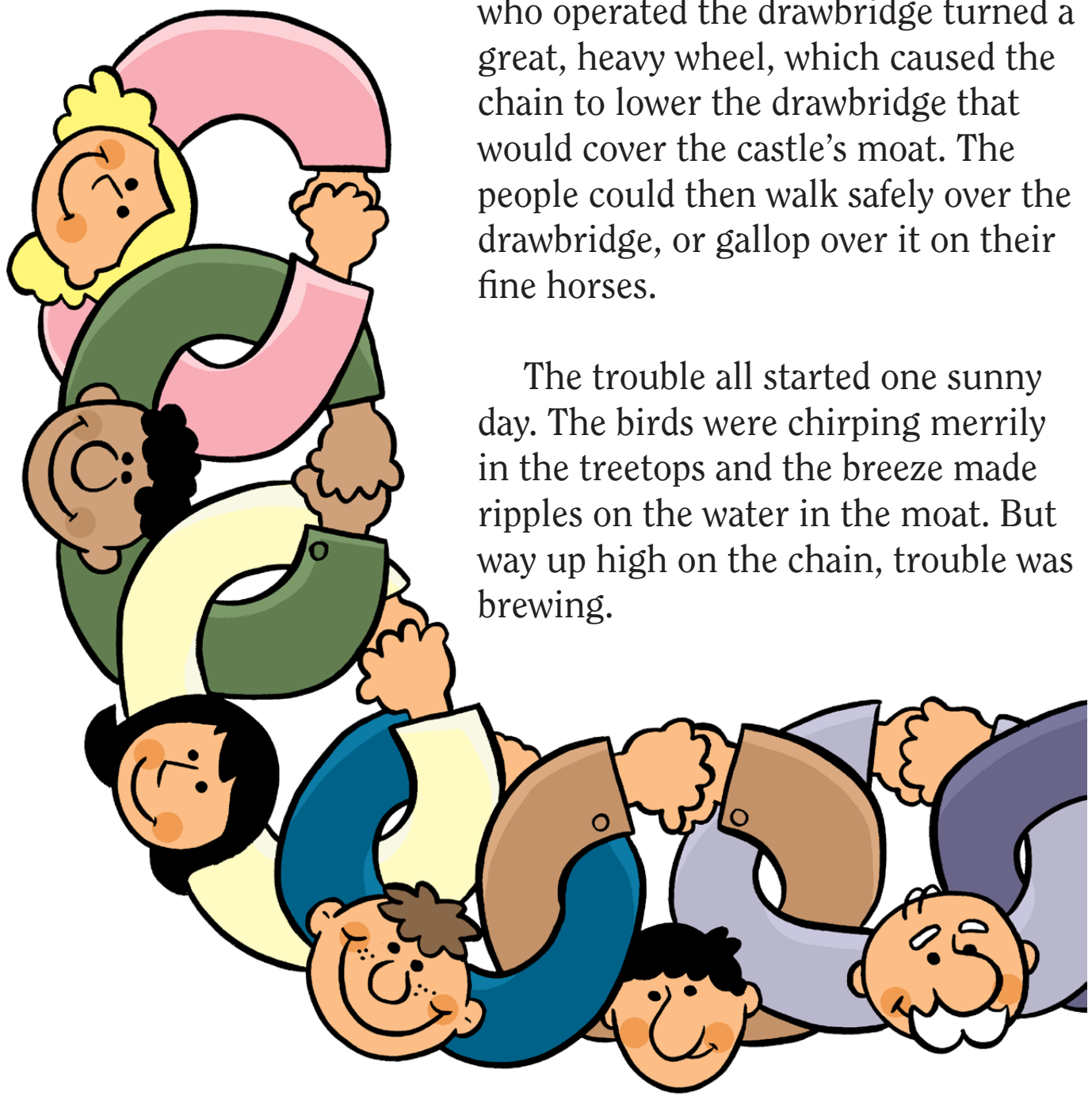
A chain is made up of many little links. Every link on the chain wraps its arms around another link, and they hug each other. As long as they hug each other real tight, the chain won't break.

There was once a link family who loved each other very much. They hugged each other securely, so their chain was very strong.

Now on that chain there was a certain little link named Lionel. He was thinner than some of the other chain links, but he did his best to hug the links on either side of him tightly. Lionel's family's chain held up a drawbridge.

A drawbridge was a great big bridge on the outside of a castle, and when people wanted to go in or out of the castle, the man





who operated the drawbridge turned a great, heavy wheel, which caused the chain to lower the drawbridge that would cover the castle's moat. The people could then walk safely over the drawbridge, or gallop over it on their fine horses.

The trouble all started one sunny day. The birds were chirping merrily in the treetops and the breeze made ripples on the water in the moat. But way up high on the chain, trouble was brewing.

It was Lionel. He was hugging his place on the chain, and he started grumbling to himself. "Look at me!" he murmured. "I'm so insignificant. I bet nobody even notices how hard I work every day."

He looked over at all the other links in his family. They all seemed quite happy to be used whenever the drawbridge needed to go down. But not Lionel. Lionel was in a bad mood.

"What I do must not be very important. In fact, if I didn't do what I was doing, nobody would even notice."

He looked around. "Look at all those other links!—How many are there? One, two, three, four, five ... ten ... twenty ... thirty ... forty ... *fifty* links! There are so many other links that I'm sure I won't be missed."

CLANG! CLANG!



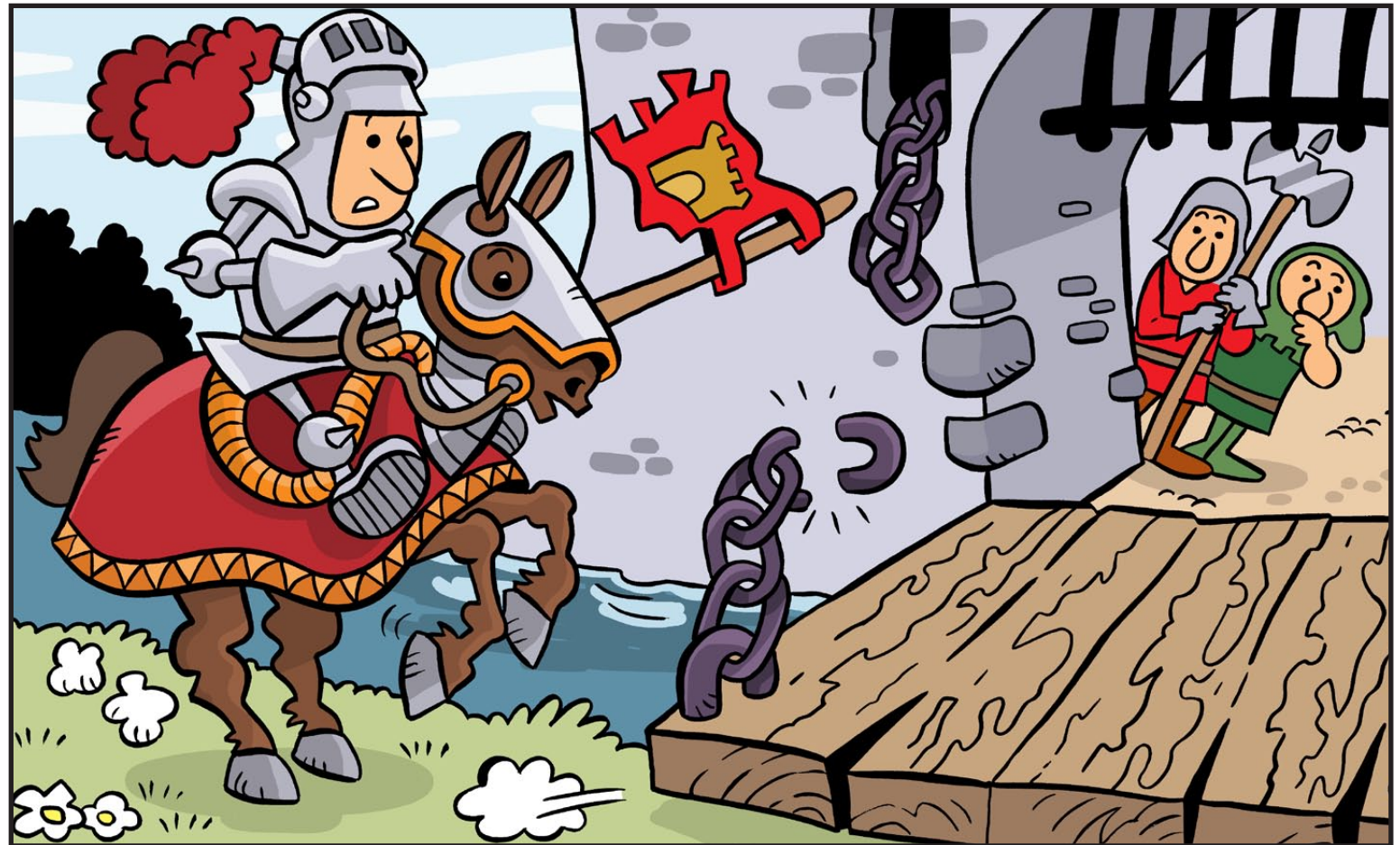
“Bridge coming down!” shouted a loud voice. The voice belonged to the drawbridge master. He was turning the wheel hard, winding out the chain so that the drawbridge would lower.

*This is my chance!* Lionel thought to himself. *When the drawbridge lowers I’m going to pop out of the chain and jump onto the drawbridge. The rest of the chain links can do the job; they don’t need me.*

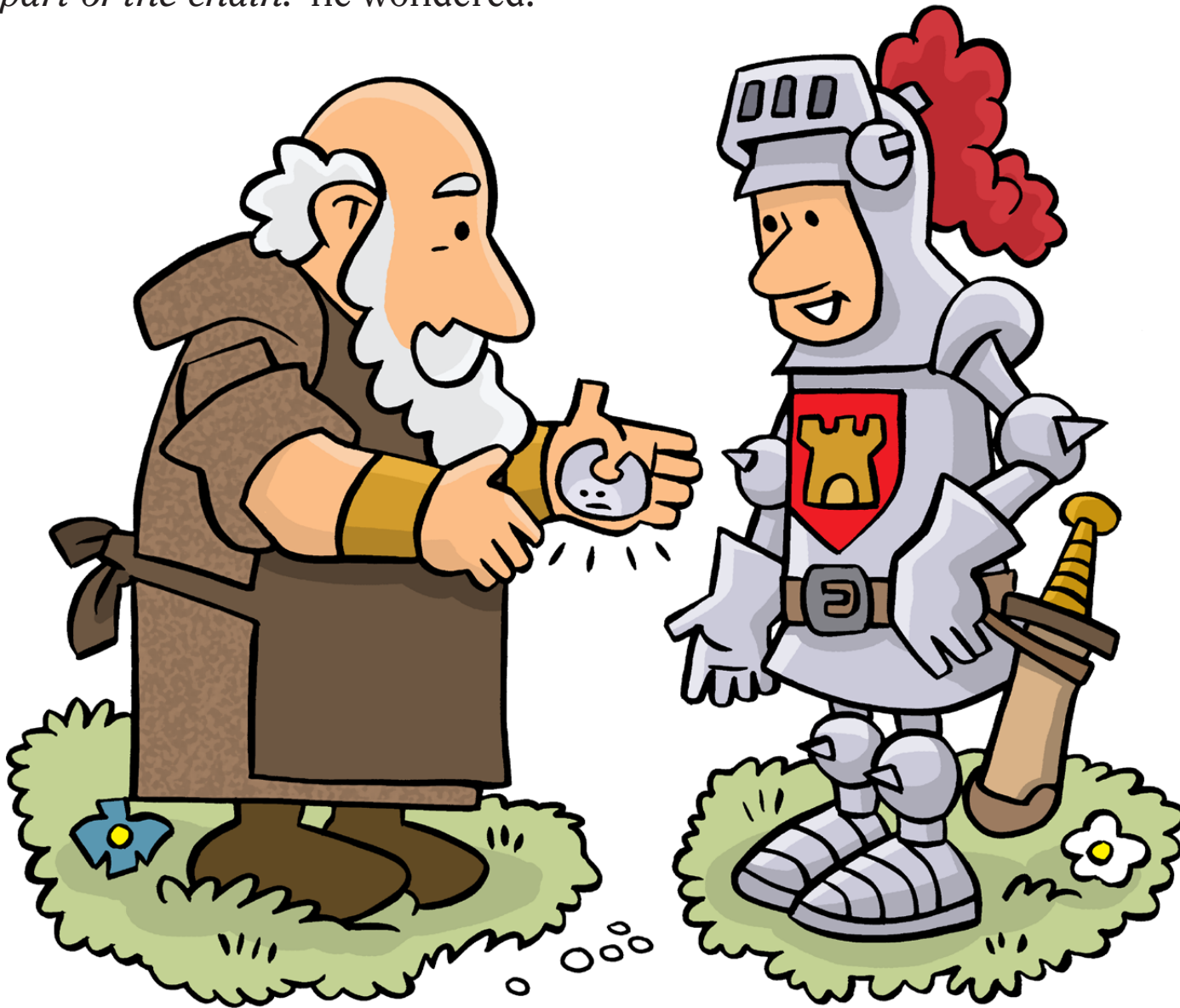
And so Lionel waited. It had to be just the right time before he let go.

The great drawbridge came further and further down. It started going faster and faster and faster, and finally Lionel saw his chance. While each member of his link family was holding tightly to the other to keep the chain strong, Lionel let go of his place in the chain.

When that happened, the bridge started hurtling downwards. Lionel’s family’s chain hung loose and broken.



Lionel lay on the ground where he had fallen, looking up at the broken chain and the drawbridge that now hung dangerously over the water. He was worried. *Could it be that I was actually an important part of the chain?* he wondered.



The horseman who had wanted to cross the bridge stared in astonishment at the spectacle. “My, my!” he exclaimed. “I wonder what happened!”

He quickly jumped off his horse and ran to the drawbridge. He went to inspect the chain. He carefully examined all the links, until he found the place that was broken. Then he saw Lionel on the ground. He bent over and picked him up.

“Tsk, tsk,” the man said. “You sure caused a great commotion for such a little link! Perhaps you haven’t realized how many others are depending on you.”



Lionel knew the man's words were true. He was sorry. He told himself, "If I ever get fixed again, I'll be glad for my place."

A workman came along. He had a big bag of tools, and set to work on the broken chain. He fiddled and plied and banged, and soon he had Lionel back where he belonged. The chain was fixed.

"Drawbridge coming down!" bellowed the drawbridge master. This time, Lionel knew exactly where he should be. He was holding on tight, and he wasn't going to let go.

*Author unknown. Illustrations by Didier Martin. Design by Christia Copeland.*

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