

In the Swedish fairy tale titled *The Marriage of the Princess and the Dragon*, the young Princess Aris must marry a fearful dragon. A wise woman gives the princess very specific instructions for her wedding night. She is told to prepare for her wedding night by wearing ten beautiful wedding gowns, one on top of the other. After the dragon carries the princess to his bed chamber, she must stop him saying that she must carefully remove her wedding attire before offering her heart to him. And he too, as instructed by the wise women, must properly remove his attire.

As the princess removes each layer of her gown, the dragon sheds another layer of his scaly armor. Though it is painful, the dragon has done this periodically before. The princess removes another gown, and then another. Each time the dragon finds he too must claw off a deeper layer of scales. By the fifth gown, the dragon begins to weep copious tears at the pain. The princess continues. With each successive layer, the dragon's skin becomes more tender, and his form softens. He becomes lighter and lighter. When the princess removes her tenth gown, the Dragon releases the last vestige of dragon form and emerges as a man, a fine prince whose eyes sparkle like a child's, released at last from the ancient spell of his dragon form. Princess Aris and her new husband are then left to the pleasures of their bridal chamber, to fulfill the last advice of the wise woman with twelve children and twenty-nine grandchildren.

The preparation and the transformation that the princess and the dragon go through for their marriage is representative of the spiritual process that we all get to go through to experience love and harmony in our lives. All of the characters in this story represent aspects of each of us. The wise woman symbolizes the Truth that we recognize when we are listening to our spiritual intuition. The princess represents the part of us that is obsessed with how we believe others see us and the masks we must wear to maintain the charade. The princess has to wear ten wedding gowns that she must shed before consummating her wedding. We too must release our attachment to appearing attractive, smart, worthy, in control, or powerful. The dragon symbolizes that part of us that is overprotective or defensive. The dragon must shed his defenses by removing his scales and exposing himself to the possibility of love and suffering. This fairy tale demonstrates our journey of transformation. The path to spiritual freedom requires passing through challenging situations. The path of purification requires cleansing, letting go, embracing and reclaiming our authentic self.

Are you true to yourself in your thoughts and actions? Here are some quotes for you to consider on your quest to authenticity.

*Everything will line up perfectly when knowing and living the truth becomes more important than looking good.*  
Alan Cohen

*The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you really are.* C.G. Jung

*No one man can, for any considerable time, wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which is the true one.* Nathaniel Hawthorne

*Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.* Mother Theresa

*If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, can be our teacher.* Pema Chödrön

*When we protect ourselves so we won't feel pain, that protection becomes like armor, like armor that imprisons the softness of the heart.* Pema Chödrön

In the same way that the princess and the dragon had to claim and embrace their authentic selves, so must we. This is the path to purification and our marriage to the universe.

Affirmation: *The Christ Spirit is alive in me.*