

By Haley Yancey  
(Based on a true story)

"[Be] wise unto that which is good" (Romans 16:19).

Myra clicked the mouse as fast as she could. Her character, Galina the elf queen, was trying to defeat the huge ice dragon. Her friends from school were online too. They were playing elves and fairies in the game.

Flashes of color burst all over the computer screen. This dragon was tough!

"Almost there, almost . . . Yes!" She jumped up and pumped her fist in the air.

The chat box on her screen lit up with messages.

"Awesome job!"

"Let's do it again!"

Myra smiled. She loved playing *Quest Planet* with her friends. "Just need to drop off this treasure first," Myra typed.

Ping. A new message popped up. "Pancake1000 would like to be your friend," she read.

Myra frowned. She was only supposed to play online with friends from school. But maybe this was someone

else she knew. She clicked "Accept."

Ping. "Hi! I'm Ethan. What's your name?"

I don't know any Ethans, Myra thought. But maybe it would be OK to talk to him.

She bit her bottom lip. "I'm Myra," she typed.

For the next few days, Myra played and chatted with Ethan online. He was really good at the game and showed her where to buy supplies for her character.

"Where do you go to school? I go to Jefferson," Ethan said.

Myra paused. That was a school near hers. Maybe he knew some people from her school. She started to type "Woodberry." But then she got a sick feeling in her stomach. She remembered how her parents always said not to share any personal information with people she didn't know—like her full name, address, or school. She also

knew to never send pictures of herself.

Ethan said he was her age and lived nearby, so maybe it was OK to talk with him. She still wasn't sure, though.

So instead she typed, "Do you want to visit the Enchanted River? I need some vanishing stones."

Pretty soon Myra noticed a pattern. Whenever she chatted with Ethan, he'd start out talking about the game, but then he'd ask questions about her real life. He always asked her for more information.

One day Ethan wrote something that made Myra really uncomfortable. She tried to change the subject. "I'm going to the Fairy Realm for some unicorn hair."

Ping. A message popped up. Then another. And another. Myra ran out of the room to find Dad.

"Dad?" Myra said.

Dad looked up from a book. "What's up?"

"I was playing my game . . ." Myra gulped and looked down. "Someone is sending me bad messages."

Dad looked at the messages while Myra tried to look anywhere but the screen. Her insides felt like they were being squeezed. She wished she had never accepted Ethan's friend request.

"I'm glad you told me. I'll report him to the website and block him from your account. I'll call his parents too. Is he in your class?"

Myra's voice was soft. "I don't know him . . . I'm sorry."

Dad hugged her. "Do you remember why you should only play online with friends you know in person?"

Myra nodded. "To stay safe."

"That's right. It's easy for people to lie about who they are online. I'm sure there are lots of nice kids on *Quest Planet*. But it's safer to only play with kids you know."

Myra was quiet for a few moments. "OK. I'm sorry."

Dad gave her another hug. "I'm proud of you for telling me when something made you uncomfortable. That took courage. And it's always a good choice."

Now Myra *really* felt brave, just like Galina the elf queen! ●

The author lives in California, USA.

"Guard your safety and the safety of others by taking great care about what personal information and images you share through technology. Do not communicate anything over the Internet or through texting that would be inappropriate to share in person."

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