

Charming

By Michael J. Allen

Most thought the ancient castle nestled in the tiny valley would be easy to besiege. Surrounded on all sides by soft, wooded rises that led to sheer cliffs high above the valley, the castle should have been child's play to conquer. This would be true, were it not for the squalling hordes of horse-size drakes swarming the cliff faces.

The current reason for the dragonkins' keening was visible at the valley's only entrance. Mounted perfectly erect upon a perfect white stallion, in perfect silvered armor, and most importantly to the man himself with perfect blond hair, waited a knight with both hands pressed over his ears. Next to him on the ground, a kindly faced young man in cerulean robes wrinkled his nose.

"Emlynn, can't you do something about that blasted caterwauling?" Sir Apollo Evarr asked.

"They don't like you," Emlynn said.

"Nonsense, everyone likes me."

"I speak dragon," Emlynn glared. "They don't."

"Then get us past them to the princess. That's why you're here."

"Shouldn't you slay the dragon first, sir?"

"And meet her with mussed hair?"

Emlynn rolled his eyes.



Inside the castle's massive hall a lady in shimmering silk gowns lounged upon a sprawling velvet cushion which filled half the hall. She looked from the magical mirror to a plain woman sipping tea seated next to her.

"Looks like another one, Jocelyn," Elysia said.

“Mother just won’t leave it alone,” Jocelyn said. “I thought you could foresee these things.”

“Usually,” Elysia shrugged, “The smaller one looks nice. It might be fun to have a man around.”

Jocelyn glared imperiously.

“Or I could eat them.”

When Jocelyn didn’t respond, Elysia strolled toward the door. She turned back to Jocelyn, “You’re sure?”

Jocelyn crossed her arms.



The mounted knight and Emlynn appeared from nowhere in the hall moments after the drakes outside quieted. Magical dust sparkled around them. Apollo dismounted, checked his appearance and glanced about the room. A plainly garbed woman, apparently the princess’s maid, prodded the fire in the gigantic hearth toward a raging flame with a poker.

Emlynn sneezed. “Damned powders.”

Jocelyn glanced up.

“Fear not, good maiden,” Apollo bowed. “We’re here to free your lady.”

Jocelyn brandished the poker. “Get out of here before you’re eaten.”

“We’ll leave,” Apollo said, “once we’ve seen the princess.”

Jocelyn glared.

Emlynn gazed star struck. “You?”

Jocelyn turned to him, a tirade died on her lips.

Apollo scrutinized her. “You? Hmm, maybe you’d do, with a proper gown, do your hair. Your mother did say--”

Her returning glare chilled the room.

Apollo tossed his hair and bowed. “I’ve come to rescue you, my princess.”

She pointed. “Get. Out.”

“Fear not, I shall slay the dragon and make you mine.”

“You won’t touch my friend, and I don’t want you.”

“Of course you do,” Apollo said.

“I don’t.”

Apollo rose and drew his sword. “Under an enchantment, I see. I’ll kill the beast and all will be well.”

Jocelyn glowered. “I don’t like you.”

“Everyone likes me,” he said.

Emlynn offered a mute apology.

Jocelyn flushed, but the color returned when she regarded Apollo. “Go away.”

Apollo waved a dismissing hand.

Elysia sashayed into the room.

“Ah, it makes sense now. My princess has arrived,” Apollo said.

“She’s the dragon,” Emlynn said.

“Nonsense.”

Elysia nodded.

A solid clang echoed throughout the hall. Apollo lay at Jocelyn’s feet beneath the damaged hearth shovel. “Will you please eat him?”

Elysia frowned.

“I wouldn’t,” Emlynn said.

They looked at Emlynn.

“Anyone that full of him?” Emlynn asked. “Yuck.”

Elysia eyed them and smiled knowingly. “I foresaw we’d like you.”