



The Secret Weakness of Dragons

and other tales a fairy
whispered in my ear

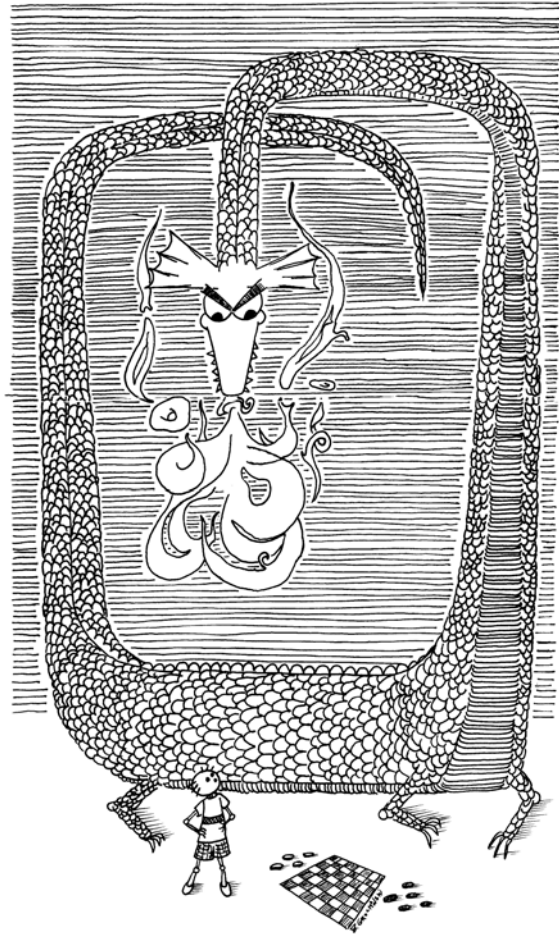
Brad Grochowski

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very many years ago, when the rulers of men still lived in stone castles, great knights rode across the land on horses saving beautiful maidens from awful fates, and the most frightening of monsters roamed the lands looking for tasty people to eat for snacks, there was a kingdom. This was a smallish kingdom, with a smallish castle and a smallish king, but it was a very nice kingdom never the less. And it was not so small that it might have escaped the notice of a particularly dreadful dragon. The dragon, you see, would spend its nights burning, scourging, and in all ways ravaging the people of this poor little kingdom. He was not welcome at all.

Now, it must be said that the King had done his best. He had sent his bravest knight, then his strongest knight, then his most-skilled-with-a-sword knight, and finally his smallest-but-still-pretty-good knight to smite this dreadful dragon. Each one of these knights, after trekking the long and dangerous trail up the steep mountain to the monster's wretched lair, was quickly defeated, eaten, and their swords used as toothpicks by this most ferocious beast. The king was now out of knights.

There so happened to live in this small kingdom a certain very clever young man. Now, the fact that he was poor and still lived with his mother should not serve to detract in any way whatsoever from his cleverness, as you shall soon see.

One evening, the young man said to his mother, "Mother, please make me a pound of your delicious biscuits, for tomorrow I am going to climb the mountain to scare off that dreadful beast once and for all!"

His mother set to work immediately. She dutifully produced the pound of biscuits, for she had great faith in her son's cleverness. She was a bit hurt, however, as she wasn't sure how she felt about her biscuits being used to frighten monsters. She would have liked to have hoped that even a dragon would enjoy them.

In the morning, the young man said farewell to his mother and set off to meet the dragon, with a basket of biscuits tucked safely

under his arm. The pathway was long, and the mountain that it climbed was steep. It took him the better part of the morning before he finally found himself standing in front of the beast's dank, dark cave.

"Dragon, come out!" he called. "I have come to speak with you!"

"Yaaaaaawn!" he heard from the cave, and nothing more.

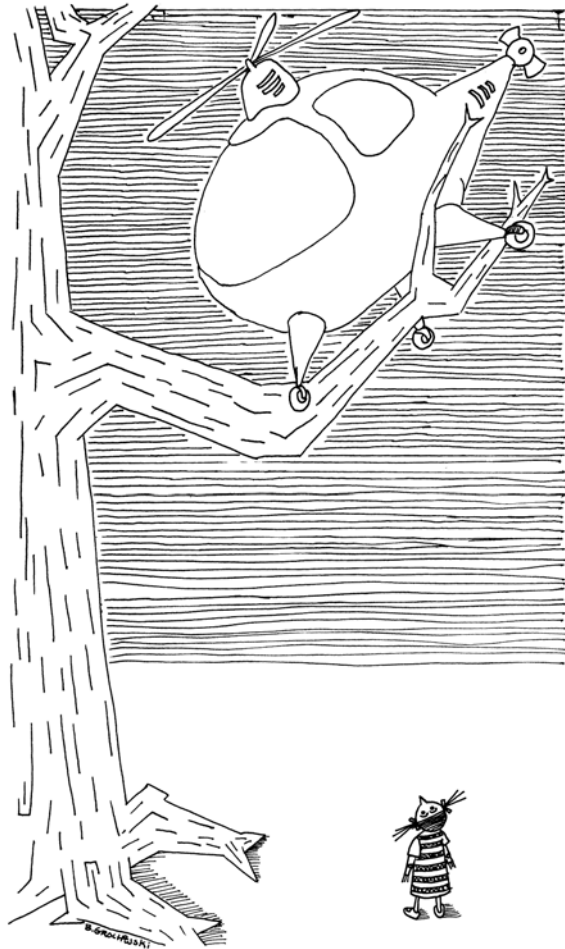
"Come out, I say! I am here to talk with you!"

"Whoever you are," mumbled the Dragon, "please go away. You are wasting your time. I do not wish to fight today, and a lucky thing it is for you because I dare say you would not leave this mountain if I did. So please, leave me be! I must rest."

"What's that, dragon? My ears do not work so well today, and I did not hear you," lied the young man. "Please come out – I would like to speak with you!"

Another dragon yawn stretched from the cave. "Very well. Perhaps I could use a snack this morning after all. I will come out."

And then slowly, sleepily, creepily, out of the cave came the largest and most dreadful creature the young man could ever have imagined. The dragon towered over him, its toenails alone reached as high as the young man's shoulder. The dragon looked down at him, sleepily.



A True Love Manifest



arah Parance could have anything she wanted. Or, more precisely, she could have anything she could imagine. Though, as she had yet to want anything she could not imagine, she supposed the point to be purely semantic. And so she would often insist that she could have anything that she wanted.

All she had to do, once she had decided what it was that she wanted, was to close her eyes, imagine what it should look like, taste like, smell like, to completely engage all of her senses in *imagining* the thing – and it would, within a matter of a few moments, appear to her through some natural-appearing means.

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"...I was sitting in my favorite arm chair enjoying my thoughts when a small fairy lighted on the sill of the open window. After a few moments of introductions and salutations, she began to tell me a string of the most unusual stories. Unfortunately, I can remember but four of them, and I am afraid I do not tell them as well as the little sprite did. Never the less, I have recorded them for you here as accurately as I am able. I hope you find them nearly as interesting as I did."

-The author, discussing the origin
of the four stories found herein

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