

IDIOT, YOU SHRUNK THE CASTLE

Tiffany L. Proctor

The western sky was burning. Sporoch stared in awe at the orange clouds billowing across the horizon. “What the devil—“

“Bugger the sky,” Raydo interrupted. “What about our little problem?”

“Your cynicism isn’t helping,” Pyquil growled ferociously.

Raydo spat at the ground in disgust. Little problem indeed. Whose brilliant idea had it been to shrink the castle anyway? Certainly not his. It must have been Sporoch. That little devil was always causing trouble.

The day before, the three wizards had come up with a diabolical plot to take over the world. Or the Kingdom of Roshca, anyway. They found in an ancient spell tome an incantation that would shrink anything the caster desired. Without stopping to consider the reason the ancient book had been hidden away for many centuries, the three fiends cast the shrink spell upon the castle and its inhabitants. Immediately the castle had been reduced to the size of a thimble, much to the delight of the scheming wizards. But after that the plot had gone terribly wrong.

King Taq of Roshca caught wind of the wizard’s plan before it was hatched, and he and all the other occupants of the castle had escaped just before the wicked deed was done. After the spell wreaked its havoc, the wizards found that they no longer had a castle in which they could fit, and when they had commanded the city’s workers to build them a grand palace, their newfound subjects replied that such an undertaking would require a vast amount of coin, and the royal coffers had been shrunk with the castle. Worst of all, the tome that held the counter-spell had been reduced to roughly the size of a grain of sand, and Pyquil had dropped it, so now it was lost forever, and the wizards had no way of un-doing what they had done.

As the wizards continued to berate each other, a peasant happened by. Raydo grabbed the poor man by the collar and lifted him off the ground. “You!” he yelled, “Give me all your money!”

“I don’t have anything,” the man sputtered. “All my money goes to the king. My money’s in the royal coffers.”

“Oh bother.” Raydo set the man down and went back to arguing with his fellows.

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“BURRRRP!”

Zorch the dragon rolled around in pain and discomfort. He knew he shouldn’t have eaten that *entire* village, but they had all looked so tasty -- the hippie woman with the flowers in her hair, the annoying priest who had poked a staff at him, the obnoxious man with the enormous gut who tasted vaguely of beer and chicken wings.

Now, Zorch was paying for his gluttony with a bad case of indigestion. With a gut-rending

belch, the dragon sent a burst of flame rising up into the clouds, which painted the sky vast shades of red and orange. It was rather beautiful, really. But man, was he full.

“Dragon!” Zorch turned his head to see a richly dressed man step up beside him. Brandishing his bejeweled sword, the man took up an offensive stance and bellowed, “I am King Taq of Roshca, and I am on a quest to vanquish three evil traitorous wizards. You will carry me into battle, or I will be forced to slay you!”

With a scoff, the dragon thought to himself that King Taq looked like he had had a rough night. Or four. A smear of mud ran from the bottom of the king’s left ear to the top of his neck, his burgundy cape was sporting a rather large rip, and a jewel had fallen from its setting on the hilt of the king’s mighty sword. To top it off, a fig leaf was sticking out of the man’s stringy, uncombed yellow hair.

“Well you don’t have to be so rude about it,” Zorch muttered. “Go ahead, climb aboard.”

“Ha!” the king laughed. “I knew my might would frighten you into obedience.”

“Doubtful,” Zorch remarked, running an eye over the king’s disheveled image. “You don’t look as if you’ll be slaying *anything* any time soon. I just need the exercise.” The dragon stretched lazily. “You’re lucky that my stomach hurts so much. You don’t look the slightest bit appetizing at the moment. In fact, I may never consume another human again.”

So, the dragon and the king flew and flew, with the dragon only stopping once to investigate a shiny bauble on the forest floor. “Bah!” Zorch exclaimed, upon closer examination of the jewel, which was shaped exactly like the empty socket on the hilt of King Taq’s sword. “Cubic Zirconium!”

Eventually the dragon spotted three robed figures arguing in the distance. “What’s that he’s got in his hand, there?” Zorch asked, flying in closer for a better view. One of the wizards was holding something in his palm. It was roughly the size of a thimble.

“I command you to land!” the king yelled, pulling on one of Zorch’s iridescent horns as if it were an emergency brake.

“Oh hush up,” Zorch muttered indignantly. “I’ll do whatever I please. You’re about on my last nerve and—“

Just then the dragon was seized by a terrible pressure in the pit of his stomach. With a roar, he emitted a foul belching noise, and flames shot out of his mouth.

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“You’re about the most incompetent dark wizard I’ve ever met, I’ve seen fairies more menacing than you, you—“

“Oh, and I suppose you forget it was you who got us into this mess in the first—“

“ME? You’re the one who found the spell, you—“

“There isn’t a half a brain between the both of you. I—“

An odd rumbling noise cut the wizards off and caused them to look skywards. Of course, by then it was too late. They barely had time to turn around before they were rendered to ash in the wake of the smoldering, stench-ridden inferno.

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Patting the dragon’s back affectionately, King Taq smiled. “Friend, you’ve done well.”

“I feel better,” Zorch replied. He stifled a laugh and lowered his voice to mutter, “You won’t be quite so pleased with me once you discover that the wizards weren’t the only things I incinerated.”

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