

*Charlotte Glover*

**OH GEORGE,  
POOR GEORGE!**  
OR: THE RELUCTANT HERO

A PLAY IN 1 ACT



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### Production notes:

There really isn't much point in elaborating scene descriptions or character studies. The characters are all stock types, and, if ever performed, the scenes will be whatever the production can manage from the resources at their disposal. So I have described it as predominately bare-stage minimalism. Scene changes are designed to take place under work lights in view of the audience. Stage crew are to be dressed plainly in black or solid colors. If desired, there may be some attempt at basic costume (a short surcote worn over slacks and sweater, perhaps), and stage crew would then come out to join the actors in crowd scenes, notably scene 3.

Suggested procedure for scene change:

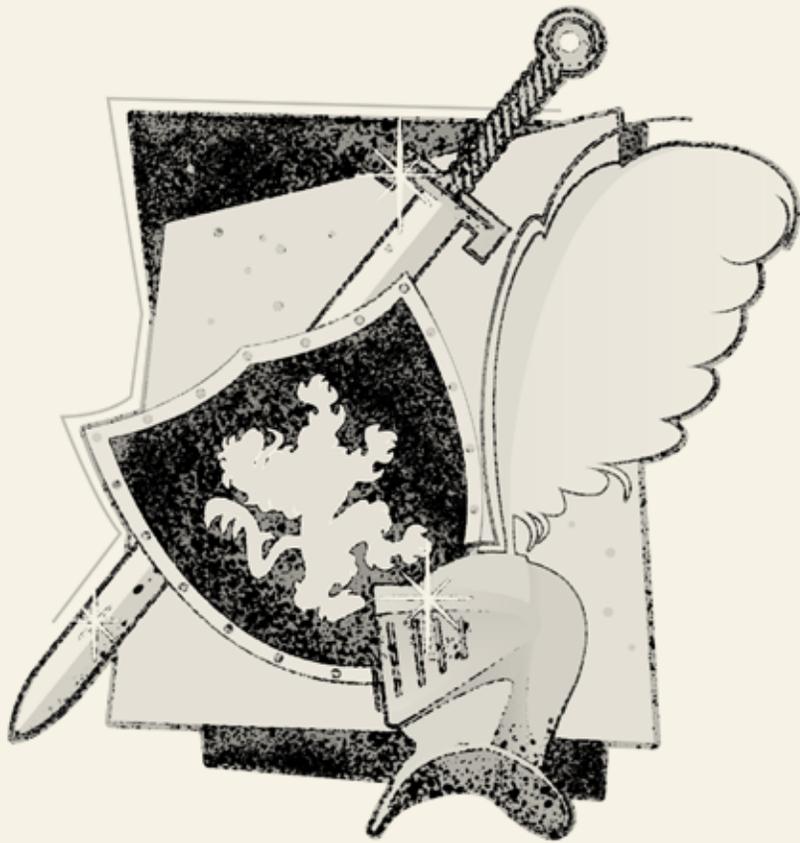
1. Blackout on action, exit actors.
2. Up work lights, enter stage crew, change and dress set, enter actors for following scene (assuming any are to be onstage at opening of following scene) take places.
3. Dim worklights.
4. Up acting lights, begin action.

Due to the somewhat more elaborate set called for in scenes 6 & 8, scene 5 may be played in front of a painted backdrop hung rather far down stage, while scene changes take place \*quietly\* behind it.

Despite there being 8 scenes, it is still a one-act play. So no formal intermission is included, but breaks may be placed at the director's discretion. It is strongly urged that scenes 6 & 7 follow one another with no break between. The most logical places for breaks are after scene 4, or scene 7.

### CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Two Trumpeters  
A Herald  
King Karlus  
Queen Mildred  
Master Trebleworth, Music Tutor  
Maida, Sweetheart of Sir George  
Sir George of Nashbury  
Giles, friend of Sir George, cousin to Maida  
Gawain, brother to Maida  
Master Medwyn, Court Sorcerer  
A page boy  
Princess Millicent  
Enid, a Lady-in-Waiting  
Emmy, another Lady-in-Waiting  
Dragon Prince Felix  
The Prince's mother, a Witch  
plus: Ladies, Gentlemen, Knights, and Maids



## Prologue:

### King's Court:

*Bare stage Cyclorama with colored banners, brightly lit*

*Two Trumpeters enter stage right, with Herald following. They march solemnly halfway around stage and halt facing each other at center. Fanfare. Herald marches between them to center stage, addresses audience.*

#### HERALD:

Honored sirs and gentle Ladies! The abduction and capture of our beloved lady, the Princess Millicent, heir to the throne of her Most Royal Father, King Karlus the Peaceful, first of that Glorious Name, by a vile and fearsome Dragon of the southern mountains – last of that Ominous Species – hath brought forth great Public Despair. Our great and Most Noble Monarch hath proclaimed this a period of National Disaster, and Great Knights and Lords of Renown have each, of Most High Service to the Kind set the Quest to slay this foul serpent and restore the Princess to her sorrowing people.

In the palace of the King, grief reigns above all other Monarchs. The very magpies circle its turrets voicing the despair of our Nation.

*Another fanfare, and blackout.*

## Scene 1

### The King's study.

*Banners drawn back up into the flyloft, Cyc lit a different, fairly dark color. Acting area brighter lit, fairly small, downstage. Large old-looking desk and handsomely carved chair behind it.*

*Similar chair next to the desk, plainer chair some distance away. There is a bell on the desk.*

*Queen is sitting in the chair next to the desk, weeping. King is attempting to comfort her. Master Trebleworth stands near the plain chair.*

*Stock characters: the King is a small man with a large voice and a short temper. He holds himself as erect as any Herald, and is equally given to bombastic statements. The Queen is taller, a motherly woman, with a gentle, guileless manner, not overly bright. Master Trebleworth, thin, wizened, with a nervous, fidgety manner. Spectacles on nose and wispy grey hair. Soberly dressed in black.*

*If possible there should be a background of magpie squawks/croaks or whatever it is that magpies do, in the background of this and the following three scenes.*

KING:

Now, now, what's done is done. Weeping won't bring her back now, will it?

QUEEN:

Oh my poor baby, poor, poor baby... *(etc)*

KING: *(sighing, to Master Trebleworth)*

I know you've gone through all this before, but would you mind going through it just one more time.

QUEEN: *(breaking into fresh tears)*

Oh please! Not again! My poor nerves! My poor baby, stolen by that— that— Oh, oh oh...

KING: *(somewhat irritated)*

But if we don't hear about it, we'll never know why!

MASTER TREBLEWORTH:

Maybe he was just hungry.

QUEEN: *(wailing)*

Oh my baby!

KING: *(impatiently)*

If he were just hungry, why would he come all the way to the royal parks from the southern mountains! Couldn't he have just stolen some peasant girl nearer his own territory? *(to Queen)* For heaven's sake, stop referring to the girl as a baby! The child is seventeen and taller than I am! *Brief pause. King looks at Trebleworth who clears throat.*

TREBLEWORTH:

We were picnicing in the royal parks. Er, I told you that.

KING:

Several times. Now tell it again.

TREBLEWORTH:

Er — ahem! We were in the royal parks, the Princess, her ladies and my humble self. We had finished our luncheon and I was amusing the Ladies with music, when one of the ladies said that she smelled something burning. Well, once she mentioned it, the atmosphere did appear to be a bit sulfurous. I recommended that the ladies return to the palace at once, dropped my instrument, and immediately went to notify the groundskeeper. I had not gone far when I heard several of the young ladies scream, and went back to offer whatever assistance I could. Before I reached where I had left them, I heard a strange, flapping, noise and felt an odd wind, and then a green shape — which I immediately recognized as a dragon — lifted into the air, drawing all of the young ladies after him in a long line connected together by a heavy cord. And they all just floated off, obviously under an enchantment of some kind.

QUEEN: *(fresh tears again)*

Oh my poor — little girl!

KING:

And you saw nothing else?

TREBBLEWORTH:

Nothing, sire. Except that one of the young ladies must have picked up my instrument, for I've not found it.

KING: *(waving a hand in dismissal)*

There must be something else! Why would a dragon go to all that trouble for no obvious reason! I've never heard that they were subtle! *(to Master Trebleworth)* You must have missed something. *(to Queen)* Oh stop it, Mildred. It isn't as though you were hearing this for the first time.

QUEEN: *(moaning)*

Oh, my poor, little Millicent!

KING: *(somewhat contrite)*

Now, now, I do know how you feel. After all, she's my daughter too. But we are doing all we can! And falling to pieces isn't helping.

QUEEN:

This is terrible!

KING:

I know it's terrible! And here I am doing everything I can do, everything any King can do, and you are making me look like a heartless monster! I love my daughter. A good, kind, intelligent, beautiful girl, I'm proud of her, I —

QUEEN:

It's been a whole month!

KING: *(hesitates, cools down, disturbed as well.)*

Well, when you stop and think, it takes some time to get to the southern mountains. And back again. Not to mention dealing with the dragon once one gets there.

TREBBLEWORTH: *(joining in)*

And to take care of the young ladies. After all, ten young ladies would take a while to pack their things for a week's journey back to the palace...

KING: *(impatient)*

What things? They were abducted with the clothes they wore and a picnic basket. *(Trebleworth is properly squelched)*

QUEEN:

It only takes 5 days to reach the mountains. Eight young knights have set off on the Quest to rescue them and there hasn't been a word! Not one word!

KING:

Now, Mildred, no news may be good news.

QUEEN:

How dare you say such a thing!

TREBBLEWORTH:

Perhaps they are on their way now. They may need to go slowly on the ladies' account.

KING: *(triumphantly)*

Of course! *(both look to him in question)* The ladies were literally carried off by the dragon. They haven't any horses! Someone would need to go to the nearest fief — which wouldn't be very near, most likely, and purchase horses, provision them, take them back to the mountains, and only then start back. Of course it's taking time. You

see Millie, there isn't anything to worry about.

QUEEN:

But what about the heralds?

KING:

Eh? What heralds?

QUEEN:

The heralds that you sent with each of the knights, with orders to ride back to the palace and report as soon as they knew the outcome of the Quest.

KING:

Oh! Those heralds. *(there is a thoughtful silence)*

TREBBLEWORTH: *(clearing throat)*

If your Majesties will permit me?

KING:

Yes, what is it?

TREBBLEWORTH:

It is possible that none of the young gentlemen have yet found the dragon's lair. After all, no one knows where it is. And those mountains are very wild and dangerous. There is no telling where the dragon's lair is in them.

KING: *(disturbed)*

True, true. But, in that case, eight knights can hardly comb a whole mountain range in search of a dragon's lair! Particularly if none of them knows what a dragon's lair looks like.

QUEEN:

Well then issue a proclamation and make more knights go!

KING:

Mildred, you cannot force a man to fight a dragon if he has no intention of fighting a dragon. They have to volunteer of their own will.

TREBBLEWORTH:

Well, you could offer some sort of reward. Isn't that rather customary?

KING:

I'm sure that anyone who succeeds in this Quest is fully confident of being given a reward.

TREBBLEWORTH:

Well, you could make it official.

QUEEN:

A purse of gold!

KING:

Mildred, they are expecting that much even if they don't succeed. And so they should. But a reward... Land, perhaps? Millie, can you think of any nice Crown estate that might do for the purpose?

TREBBLEWORTH:

If your Majesties will permit me?

KING:

Well, what is it!

TREBBLEWORTH:

Well – there is always the usual.

KING:

The... *(stops and considers)* Yes. There is always the usual.

QUEEN:

Oh surely not!

KING:

Now, now, perhaps only as a last resort.

QUEEN:

Why, just think of what could happen! You don't know who might kill that dragon! She might be even worse off than she is now!

KING:

Hardly that, Mildred. After all, any man who saved her from a dragon must have some good qualities! It's certainly no worse than packing her off to some foreign Prince, sight unseen. I know how you hate that idea. This could prove to be a blessing in disguise.

QUEEN:

In an impenetrable disguise! She's so young!

KING:

You were only sixteen when you married me! Yes, that would certainly raise a host of volunteers.

I know you hate the idea of sending her away, and in addition to that, she is my only heir. If she were to marry one of our own fine young gentlemen, there would be no need to send her away. And if she's marrying below her station, there is ample political reason to support her doing so. We will be able to keep her with us permanently.

QUEEN:

Yes, but—

King:

After all, she is the heir to the throne. And if nothing else, we would be sure of having her rescued. And would be able to keep an eye on her husband and see that he

learns his future duties to the realm under our own tutelage. After all, what young man wouldn't want to marry a Princess if he got the chance, let alone our Millicent. Beautiful, intelligent, graceful, obedient, charming...

QUEEN: *(sighing)*

True, all true.

TREBBLEWORTH:

So it is settled, your Majesties?

KING:

Yes, I think it is. Come, I need to discuss this with the Council, and draft a proclamation. *(They exit. Queen is left alone. She wipes her eyes, blows her nose and rings bell.)*

QUEEN: *(sighs)*

Oh, those wretched magpies! Their noise just makes everything worse!

*Enter Maida, one of the Princess's Ladies-in-Waiting. She is the soubrette of the piece. About 16 years old, more cute than beautiful.*

MAIDA:

Yes, your Majesty?

QUEEN:

Oh! Maida, I wasn't expecting you.

MAIDA:

Lady Greyling has the headache. I thought that I might as well answer your bell since... *(bites lower lip, her voice has begun to shake)*

QUEEN:

Oh, don't you cry, too. I cannot bear to see people cry, I always start tearing up as well. And I've been weeping all afternoon as it is. There is an audience in an hour, too!

MAIDA:

I try not to — but I can't help it!

QUEEN:

Don't think about it! Think about something else instead! Surely at your age there must be something pleasant to think of! There, see! You are blushing! Anyone might think you were in love!

MAIDA:

Oh! (*covering her cheeks with her hands*)

QUEEN:

Why Maida, dear! Are you, really!

MAIDA:

Shall I bring you some spiced wine, Majesty? Lady Edith of Pilchester always claims that spiced wine helps to banish the cold vapors of the melancholy.

QUEEN:

Yes, I daresay she does. Certainly she is feeling no pain. Don't be shy about your lover, my dear — anyone would think you were ashamed of him. He is presentable, is he not? Who is he? Who is his father? Is he here in court? He does mean to marry you doesn't he?

MAIDA:

Oh, yes! He isn't at court yet, but he is coming to ask the King's blessing since I am living here under Royal protection rather than at my father's estate.

QUEEN:

Do your parents approve?

MAIDA:

Yes, I'm sure they do. My brother Gawain heard them

talking about him and they both liked him.

QUEEN:

But who is he?

MAIDA:

Oh! I'm sorry. He is Sir George of Nashbury.

QUEEN:

Not old Sir Grieves's son?

MAIDA:

Yes, the same. Now that his father is gone, George is Lord of Nashbury.

QUEEN:

Ah, yes, Sir Grieves. He was a good man and a loyal subject. We were most sorry to hear of his passing. And so now Nashbury is now the estate of Sir George. I have never met him. He was still at school when last we progressed through Nashbury. Isn't he terribly young? What is he like?

MAIDA:

He is a year older than I. Our birthdays fall in the same month. He is the perfect knight. Handsome, and wise, and good, and honest. I haven't seen him since I came to court. My family visited Nashbury when I was quite young, and also, my cousin Giles is his closest friend and they have visited us at Linns two or three times since then. I haven't seen him for the past year, but we write to each other through Giles.

QUEEN:

Well, it sounds that you young people have been keeping secrets from your unsuspecting elders.

MAIDA:

I shouldn't think it is much of a secret to them. But it probably is to everyone else. My brother Gawain is the only person I've actually spoken to about it.

QUEEN:

And your cousin, of course.

MAIDA:

No, that's what is rich! He passes our messages back and forth, but he hasn't a clue! Otherwise I cannot imagine that it would have remained so secret so long!

QUEEN:

Merciful heavens! I need to be ready for that royal audience and I am sure my eyes are as red as holly berries. Maida, do come and help me prepare.

MAIDA:

Shall I bring that spiced wine?

QUEEN:

Tush! Edith of Pilchester is an addlepated fool, and I have no doubt that it's partly due to her fondness for spiced wine.

*Maida laughs and follows her off left.*

*Blackout*

## Scene 2

### Courtyard

*Bare stage, brightly lit. The banners may be back. There is a bit of a crowd milling about.*

*George and Giles enter down left. In regards to Maida's description, George does look like an honest young man, but he is not particularly handsome. Presentable, however, about 17 or 18 years old. Any claims to his great wisdom are debatable, and the chances of his being significantly better than any other nice young knight are moot. He does seem quiet and sensible. He does not look like the young Lord of an estate. More like the nice young clerk at the supermarket. Giles, however, is very handsome and dashing, and a chatterbox. One easily can believe that he has a track record of dreaming up grandiose schemes that never quite come off. Nor do they get thought all the way through before being put into action.*

*Giles himself, of course has too much sense, or perhaps not enough guts to go chasing off after his own half-baked schemes, but he generally seems to manage to send someone else chasing off after them in his place, and is glad enough to tag along and watch. He has the ideas. He lets other people look after the details of getting them to work.*

*Their friendship is almost one of necessity. George has a need for someone to keep him stirred up, while Giles needs someone to periodically sit on him.*

GILES:

Well! What do you think of court so far Georgie? It's certainly different from Nashbury.

GEORGE:

Yes it is. Quite.

GILES:

Bigger, for one thing! Say! I ought to see if I can find my cousin! (*George perks up at this*) Gawain came to court some months ago. He's a Page, I think. Or maybe a Squire.

GEORGE: (*mildly disappointed*)

Yes, do that. And see if you can find Maida as well.

GILES:

That's right! Maida is here, too! I'll ask around later and see if I can find her. In the meantime why don't we strike up an acquaintance with a couple of the maids...

GEORGE:

No, thank you.

*Enter Gawain, upper rt. Maida's brother, about 14-15, a likable boy. Makes his way through the crowd until he spots George and Giles, crosses to them.*

GAWAIN:

Hey! When did you two get here?

GILES:

This morning. Oh! How's your sister?

GAWAIN:

Fine. She'll be all the better for hearing you've made it.

GILES:

Well, with all due modesty, I always was her favorite cousin.

GAWAIN: (*to George*)

So you made up your mind and came to court.

GEORGE:

Yes, I finally did. After all, it wouldn't do for someone to butt in ahead of me.

GAWAIN:

Not a lot of danger of that. Or not yet anyway. (*slyly*) Welcome...

GILES:

Gawain, you would not believe the effort I had to put into getting this dull stick to make a jaunt to court! Acted like he was scared stiff. Almost backed out when we finally were ready to leave. You would think he was contemplating a life's sentence. (*laughs*) You would think he was being summoned to his own funeral!

GAWAIN: (*also laughing*)

It won't do to get cold feet at this stage of things, George!

GILES:

Not on your life! (stops short) Hey! (*to Gawain*) What "stage of things"? (*to George*) What's he talking about, "stage of things"?

GAWAIN: (*indicating Giles*)

He doesn't...?

*George shakes his head. Gawain stares at Giles in flat disbelief.*

GAWAIN:

Oooh, Georgie here wrote all his plans. You passed them on. Even I could tell what he was up to.

GILES: (*looks from one to the other*)

I don't believe you. You're making that up.

GAWAIN: (*teasing*)

Well, you have to be able to read between the lines!

GILES: (*stares at Gawain a moment and then gives up on him*)

Georgie. What plans? You didn't tell me about any plans. Is this something important?

GAWAIN: *(not ready to give up)*

Oh, important enough to get cold feet over! Tell him George!

GEORGE: *(proudly)*

I am taking a giant step.

GILES:

A what? A what kind of step?

GEORGE:

A giant step. I have come to court to ask the King's blessing on my marriage.

GILES: *(completely incredulous)*

Marriage!?

GEORGE:

Marriage.

GILES:

But why!

GEORGE:

Giles, why not! I've finished school. My father is gone, and I have come into my lands and title. Surely the next step is to marry and raise a family to tend to my holdings and to see to their welfare. I love the girl, I'm ready to settle down and do my duty to the people who depend on me.

GILES:

At your age? Where's your spirit of adventure?

GEORGE:

I haven't got one! You know that. You're the one who is always dreaming of deeds of derring-do. I just want to be able to sit at my own hearth of a winter's night and know that my estate is prosperous, and that I've had a hand in

making it that way.

GILES:

You'd be bored stiff!

GEORGE:

No, Giles, you'd be bored stiff. It was what I was raised for and it's what I want.

GILES:

You mean you would give up power, and honor, just to—

GEORGE: *(sharply)*

I've got all the power that I need, thank you! And as for honor — My father never did anything "glorious" in his life! He didn't go chasing around in armor hacking up villains. He stayed quietly on his estate, and saw to its needs. He took care of his people, and you know what? Nashbury has been one of the most prosperous and orderly fiefs in all the kingdom for the past twenty-five years. And you know that it's far from the biggest!

GAWAIN:

I can see what he is getting at, coz.

GEORGE: *(going on without stopping)*

And my father, who will never go down in any history outside of the the estate records, was just as admired and honored as any other knight that you, or anyone else can name. He always told me that there was more true honor in a field well tilled, than in a hundred battlefields.

GILES:

Well, yes I've been told that too, Georgie, but really, I —

GEORGE:

Just polish your armor Giles, and thank the powers

that be that you are your father's youngest son. You, who will never want to manage an estate, will never be called upon to do so.

*Enter the Sorcerer Medwyn. Your standard Sorcerer type, couldn't mistake him for anything else. He's not the "lovable old man" variety of the breed. He's the impressive sort. Gawain notices him first.*

GAWAIN:

That's Medwyn!

GILES:

Medwyn?

GAWAIN:

Court Sorcerer. He takes walks in the afternoons. You see him around the Palace sometimes. He hardly ever speaks to anyone. But everyone says he's very wise — and has a reputation for being very short-tempered.

*GILES: (Scoffing. I'm sure he doesn't realize that Medwyn is within earshot)*

Oh. Magic! A lot of mountebanks' tricks! There's nothing to it once you figure out how it's done.

*MEDWYN: (dryly)*

Indeed. *(all three turn and stare at him. He is giving them a very sour look)* Which is not to say that there are not a great number of mountebanks pretending to my profession. But you do not typically find them attached to the Royal court. That would undoubtedly be a lot easier if magic were nothing but "mountebank tricks."

*GILES: (who apparently does not know when to shut up)*

Well, I mean — magic! I—I...

MEDWYN:

And I suppose that now that I claim that my magic is real, you expect that I am going to feel it necessary to give you all a demonstration in order to prove it.

*GILES: (floundering)*

Well, er — um...

MEDWYN:

Well, young man, you are fresh out of luck.

GILES:

I—I didn't! I—I...

*MEDWYN: (to George, ignoring Giles's sputtering)*

I learned better than that by the time I was your age. The person either sneers, or he asks to be taught the trick, so he can amuse his friends, or he believes you — which tends to be, if anything, rather worse.

*GAWAIN: (intrigued)*

How can that be worse? Isn't that the point? What made you decide that?

GEORGE:

What happened?

*MEDWYN: (disgusted, looks them all three over)*

Oh very well. I haven't mentioned it for some years now, and there is a whole new crop of fools at court. I might as well get the word out. I'll have no peace otherwise. When I was young and foolish — and you may well believe that was some time ago — I was as good as called a fraud by the lady of a well-known knight, who shall remain nameless. Of course I took offense, and to prove my abilities, I took an iron nail and turned it to gold.

GAWAIN: (*eagerly*)

And that she believed.

MEDWYN:

Well, of course she believed it. It was true. And then she had the gall to offer to hire me to turn all of the base metal in their castle into gold.

GILES:

Did you accept?

MEDWYN:

Accept? I transported myself to my most secret laboratory and didn't come out until she stopped searching for me. It took nearly a year. Fools.

GAWAIN:

What did she offer you?

MEDWYN:

A purse of gold.

GAWAIN:

Oh.

GEORGE:

Oh.

MEDWYN:

All of the base metal in the castle to gold, indeed! It wouldn't have ended there, either, you know. She'd have boasted to all her cronies and hangers-on, and they would no doubt have been lining up to offer me purses of gold to enrich their castles as well. Disrupt the entire economy. Humph!

GAWAIN:

What did you do after that?

MEDWYN:

I came to court and took service with the King, and made it clear that my magic was at his command, and no one else's. I have been fortunate in that neither King Karlus or his father have been the sort of ruler who immediately looks for a magical solution to their problems. (*to Gawain*) Haven't you duties to attend to? There is an audience in half an hour.

GAWAIN:

Oh! I forgot! (*hurries off right*)

MEDWYN: (*sourly*)

I had best make an appearance myself. I have a feeling that my luck is about to run out. If you stick around you may just get that magical demonstration, yet. (*Nods to the other two boys who remove their caps and bow respectfully*)

GEORGE:

We have been honored to speak with you, sir.

MEDWYN:

So you have. And don't you forget it. (*leaves right*)

GILES: (*when Medwyn is gone*)

We'd better find our own way to the throne room before that audience starts.

GEORGE:

Yes.

*After a somewhat bewildered look they both also exit right.*

*Blackout*

### Scene 3

#### Throne room.

*The banners are back and there are a pair of thrones center stage, Preferably on a dais, where the King and Queen are seated. The trumpeters are on either side of the dais. The Herald, holding a rolled-up scroll, stands by the Queen's throne and Medwyn next to the King's. Maida is among the Queen's attendants toward the back where George and Giles cannot see her. Gawain stands at attention down right.*

*George and Giles are in among the crowd down left. George is craning about looking for Maida. Giles is looking bored. There are a pair of petitioners before the throne. As the lights come up, they bow and back away from the thrones and depart.*

KING: *(to Herald)*

Were there any other matters pending, on today's schedule?

HERALD:

No, your Majesty.

KING:

Then, before we hear any new petitions, you will proceed with our proclamation.

HERALD: *(bowing)*

Yes, your Majesty.

*Herald nods to Trumpeters who play a fanfare. Herald, steps down from the dais and into center stage. He takes the scroll, unrolls it, and reads. The crowd perks up and pays attention. Including George and Giles.*

HERALD:

Hear ye! Hear ye! His most August and Resplendent

Majesty hath proclaimed that whomsoever should succeed in the deliverance from captivity of our Most Beloved Princess Millicent, shall be entitled to her hand in marriage, and the gift of all those southern lands now held by the dragon, even unto the last furlong.

*When the Herald has finished the proclamation, and returned to the dais, Giles, with the manner of someone in the grip of a bright idea, grabs George by the elbow and pushes his way through the crowd into center stage, dragging George in his wake.*

GILES:

Your Majesty! Sir George of Nashbury requests your aid and blessing in the quest of delivering the Princess from the clutches of the Southern Dragon and returning her to her subjects without undue delay!

*George stares at Giles in horror. So does Maida, who muffles a shriek, which is drowned out by the chorus of "Here, here"s. Gawain seems more inclined to laugh, but succeeds in suppressing it by stuffing a hand over his mouth. The King is gratified.*

KING:

And my aid and blessing he shall have! Sir George, you shall be outfitted with all you require, and shall set out the day after tomorrow for your quest of our royal daughter's deliverance. Not only in honor of your Quest, but in memory of your noble father who was ever one of Our most loyal subjects. We shall discuss the matter at further length in my study after refreshments. Indeed, let us all repair to the banquet hall and drink to the success of your endeavor. *(He nods to the Herald, the Trumpeters step forward, give fanfare.)* And any other such volunteers, as well.

HERALD:

Hear ye! Here ye! His Majesty hath proclaimed that all should repair to the banquet Hall.

*(Another fanfare. If background music is used it starts up again. King and Queen rise. All bow and curtsy. King and Queen exit right, their attendants and most of the other courtiers following. Under cover of the crowd, Maida collars Gawain and hustles him off upper left. Medwyn notices this, pauses, looks at the George and Giles for a moment, and exits right, leaving George and Giles pretty much alone center stage. Giles starts off right, George, furious, drags him back.)*

GEORGE:

Giles, are you mad!

GILES: *(somewhat taken aback)*

What's the matter? You said you wanted to get married. You wanted the King's blessing, didn't you? So, you kill the dragon and marry the Princess, and then not only are you the Lord of Nashbury, and all the southern mountains, but you are in line for the throne as well!

GEORGE: *(fuming)*

I didn't want to marry the Princess. I had already chosen my own bride, thank you very much! And how am I supposed to kill a dragon?

GILES:

Well why not! This is the chance of a lifetime! Opportunities like this don't come down the track every day, you know. I'm just seeing to your best interests.

GEORGE:

Fine! You rescue the Princess then. What about the girl

I came here to marry? Did you even think about her?

GILES:

Er, oh. *(pause)* Well, I'm sure she'll get over it. I mean it's not like it was anything personal. Besides, I've heard that the Princess is really worth fighting dragons over. Say, George, since you are sort of the man of the hour, we'd best be getting off to that banquet hall before they start wondering what happened to us. *(exits right)*

*George starts to storm after him, but draws himself up short, and composes himself to exit quietly.*

*Blackout*

#### Scene 4

#### Maida's Chamber

*Small lighted area toward middle of stage, with a large folding screen.*

*Stage lights come up to find Maida pacing in front of the screen, impatiently. Soon Gawain enters down right, with a bundle of clothing under his arm.*

Maida:

There you are! Give it here.

Gawain:

I still don't see —

Maida:

You don't need to. All I want from you is one of your last year's tunics and a tabard. Did you hear that ass Giles! Oh, yes, of course you did. You probably thought it was funny! *(she takes the bundle and goes behind screen)*

GAWAIN:

Well, it was at the time. It won't be funny getting it straightened out.

MAIDA:

I don't think it was funny in the least. I could murder Giles!

GAWAIN:

You can leave that part to the dragon.

MAIDA:

Oh, Ugh. I don't want to even think about it. It's George who is being shoved off to fight the dragon. If I know Giles, he'll be well in the background.

*Gown is draped over top of screen*

GAWAIN:

Hey! You aren't intending to wear them!

MAIDA:

Well what did you think I wanted them for? You did say I could have them.

GAWAIN:

I didn't think you wanted them for yourself.

*Small page with large basket enters down right. Chemise is also hung over top of screen*

PAGE:

Ahem! By your leave Sir...

MAIDA:

Who is that!

GAWAIN:

One of the pages. *(to page)* What do you want?

PAGE:

The young lady requested that the cook —

MAIDA:

Oh, that was fast! Thank you! Give it to my brother there, please.

PAGE:

Yes, Miss. *(Hands Gawain the basket)* By your leave, Sir. *(bows and leaves down right)*

GAWAIN:

What is this?

MAIDA: *(sarcastically)*

Clean linen, what else would the cook be sending up?

GAWAIN:

Maida—

MAIDA:

Well, then don't ask silly questions. *(pause)* Oh those dratted magpies! They set my nerves on edge. It's like they are trying to tell us something! *(Emerges from behind the screen in a Squire costume. It doesn't fit her very well.)* I'm going to need a bit more help. Can you get my horse ready without making a lot of fuss and drawing attention to yourself?

GAWAIN:

Your—

MAIDA:

Horse. To ride.

GAWAIN: *(stares at her dubiously)*

Just what do you think you are doing?

MAIDA:

Isn't it obvious? I'm following them.

GAWAIN:

George and Giles?

MAIDA:

Who else?

GAWAIN:

No, you're not.

MAIDA:

Who is going to stop me!

GAWAIN: (*sighing*)

I will, if I have to! Do you think I'm going to let my sister go chasing after two men through the mountains in my old clothes — with a dragon in pursuit! I'll — I'll write mother!

MAIDA: (*sweetly*)

Oh you do that, and I'll write who was saving a cache of old bones for his dogs in her father's armor.

GAWAIN:

I was six! And I think she's figured it out by now!

MAIDA: (*silently mouths counting to ten, and changes tactics*)

Oh very well then! You can come too. You can't convince me that you don't want to. At least we've got another day before they leave to organize things.

GAWAIN: (*clearly torn*)

Oh... all right! What is the plan?

MAIDA:

Do I look like a Squire in this?

GAWAIN:

Not like any that I ever saw. But you will probably be able to get out the gate without being challenged. If you wait until after dark, that is.

MAIDA:

Okay. This is what I had planned. I asked the cook to pack enough bread and cheese and things like that to last me three days. I was going to follow them until it ran out, and then join them on the fourth morning. By then we would have been far enough away that they wouldn't send me back without an escort. I don't know what they are going to do if you're there. But I'll refuse to go, anyway. Now here is where you come in. I wanted you to get my horse ready and take her out to the royal park the evening before they leave with as little attention drawn as possible. I intended that when it got dark I was going to slip out of the palace and meet you. Then, I was going to send you back, and wait until morning, and then I would follow them at a distance. I can't lead a horse out dressed like this myself, or I'll be questioned, and then it would be all over.

GAWAIN:

What were you going to do over night?

MAIDA:

Sleep in the park, of course! It's perfectly safe!

GAWAIN:

That's what the Princess thought too, and that was in broad daylight.

MAIDA:

Oh, don't be a wet blanket. If the worst we have to contend with is sleeping on the ground in the royal park, we can consider ourselves fortunate! I'm going to need a cap as well. Can you loan me one?

GAWAIN: (*resigned*)

Okay, okay. (takes off cap and gives it to her) It'll all be

ready. I'll have the cook pack me something too, and I'll lead the horses out after dinner tomorrow evening and wait by that stand of willows, out of sight of the gate. Do you think you can get out of the gate without being noticed? We're going to need bedrolls, and a firestarter as well. I'll take care of that part, too.

MAIDA:

Are you sure you wouldn't rather stay behind and cover for me? Or pretend that you didn't know anything about it? We're bound to get in all kinds of trouble.

GAWAIN: *(witheringly)*

Please. This whole plan is the silliest thing you've got up to yet. If I thought I could talk you out of it, I would, and save us both the trouble. Are you sure that you wouldn't rather I just tell someone what you are up to and have them catch you?

MAIDA:

You wouldn't dare!

GAWAIN:

Oh wouldn't I! I may not be able to keep you from going off half-cocked, but at least you're not going to do it alone. It's going to be easier traveling for two than for one, anyway. So save your breath. And put your own clothes on! *(exits right)*

*Blackout*

## Scene 5

### Forest.

*May be played in front of a painted backdrop downstage. There is a stump large enough to sit on down right.*

*George and Giles enter left. Medwyn following. He is somewhat disheveled and there are leaves in his hair. He isn't amused.*

MEDWYN:

Are we continuing, or are we making camp here?

GEORGE:

We'll make camp here.

GILES:

Georgie! We should be ten miles further on by this time! We'll never get there at all at this rate!

MEDWYN:

Humph! Slow adventures are the only sort I am prepared to take part in at my age. *(crosses and sits on stump)*

GEORGE: *(under his breath to Giles)*

And I am in no hurry to get there. As you very well know.

MEDWYN:

Well, if we are stopping here one of you ought to unload the horses.

GILES:

I'll do it. *(exits)*

GEORGE:

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to come with us, Sir.

MEDWYN: *(sighs)*

I cannot fault your reasoning. I've heard Trebble-

worth's account of the Princess's abduction, myself. It surprises me that you are the first of our "young heroes" to think to ask for magical assistance.

George:

By all I've ever heard, dragons are inherently highly magical creatures.

MEDWYN:

That they are.

GEORGE:

I'm sorry about the accommodations. I suppose it is rather rough for you.

MEDWYN:

I've had rougher in my time. Admittedly it was a good long while ago. At least the country is lovely at this season. Perhaps it was past time for me to make an expedition away from the palace.

*(enter Giles with a bundle of blankets, saddlebags and a cooking pot. He hands a saddlebag to Medwyn and exits again. Medwyn removes a book from the saddlebag and starts reading.)*

*(re-enter Giles with some more odds and ends. He pulls George over to stage left)*

GEORGE:

What is it?

GILES: *(softly, worried)*

Have you had the feeling that someone is following us?

GEORGE: *(also softly)*

Yes. When did you notice?

GILES:

Yesterday, when did you?

GEORGE:

The day before. I think we ought to tell Medwyn.

GILES:

Yeah, we'd better.

GEORGE:

Master Medwyn!

MEDWYN: *(looking up from his book)*

Eh?

GEORGE:

We don't want to alarm you, Sir, but both Giles and I believe that we are being followed.

MEDWYN:

Humph! High time you noticed.

GILES:

You knew?

MEDWYN:

I'm old. I'm not deaf. We picked them up in the royal park and they've been with us ever since. Probably some glory-seekers. Don't know why they didn't volunteer themselves. But I suppose we'll find out.

GEORGE:

They? Do you have any idea how many?

MEDWYN:

Two of them, I think. Small horses. Possibly mules or donkeys.

Giles:

Probably not seasoned warriors, then. Come on George, two against two, we can take them. *(digs through the pile of stuff and comes up with a sword that he buckles on.)*

GEORGE:

Giles, are you crazy? We have a dragon to worry about. What if these are magicians, or bandits, or —

MEDWYN:

Not much fear of that. Bandits would have already attacked us under cover of dark, and I can feel the presence of another magician from a mile off.

GILES:

Well, then, let's go! (*turns and unsheathes sword, as Gawain and Maida enter.*) Gawain?! What are you doing here? Who's that?

MAIDA:

Well, honestly!

GEORGE:

Maida!

GILES:

Maida?

MAIDA:

George! (*runs to him throws her arms around him and bursts into tears*) Oh George!

GILES:

Hey what —! (*finally catches on*) You mean she's —?

GAWAIN:

Light dawneth.

GILES:

Hoo boy!

MEDWYN: (*deadpan*)

How touching.

GAWAIN: (*finally noticing Medwyn*)

Master Medwyn?

MEDWYN:

Yes?

GAWAIN:

What — I mean, why did —

MEDWYN:

My assistance was requested. The King agreed. It was your cousin's idea. First halfway intelligent idea he's come up with.

MAIDA: (*wiping her eyes*)

It's certainly the only intelligent thing he's done since he showed up at court.

MEDWYN: (*smiles grimly*)

As I said.

GEORGE: (*to Maida*)

But why —?

MAIDA:

George! Do you really expect that I would sit there tamely in the palace, listening to those magpies, doing embroidery, just waiting to hear something, anything, while you were being forced off on a quest that you didn't even want!

GEORGE:

But you can't come with us!

MAIDA:

Don't try to send me back Georgie. I haven't vowed to obey you yet. I won't go. I just won't!

GILES:

Oh yes you will! Sorry, Georgie, but she's been my

cousin for longer than she's been your intended. Maida, you and Gawain are leaving for the palace the first thing in the morning! And that's that!

MAIDA:

We most certainly are not.

GILES:

I say you are!

GEORGE:

Maida, listen, please. We can't take you dragon hunting with us. Please don't try to make things more difficult than they are already. Giles is right. Things are liable to get dangerous.

MAIDA:

Yes, in about two minutes! I am not going back to the palace, and that, is that!

GILES:

I say that—

MAIDA:

I should think that you had said more than enough already! *(there is a tense silence)*

GEORGE: *(helplessly)*

Master Medwyn...

MEDWYN:

I have nothing to do with it! However, I suspect that attempting to send the young lady and her escort back is likely to be a great deal more trouble than any of us are willing to expend. And she'd probably just turn around and start following us again once she was out of sight. You might as well let her stay.

MAIDA:

Oh thank you!

GEORGE:

But Master Medwyn — *(Medwyn waves a hand in dismissal and starts digging through his saddle bag.)*

MEDWYN:

Now where did I — Ah, here they are. We expect to be escorting any number of young ladies back to the palace if this quest succeeds. I packed enough protective amulets for all of them. I know I tucked in a couple of extras as well. Ah, yes, here you go young lady. A loan until we return to the palace. I suppose you might as well take one too, young Squire. You two others may take your chances, you, after all, volunteered for this expedition.

GAWAIN:

I'll take my chances as well.

GILES:

Gawain, if you are going to come tagging along, you are going to—

GAWAIN:

Oh shut up, Giles. We've got enough to deal with than to have to listen to you braying away. *(Giles opens his mouth to retort, but Medwyn claps his hands for attention.)*

MEDWYN:

Very well! But none of this gets us set for the night, and it is somewhat later than it was the last time I mentioned the subject. *(to Gawain)* Suppose you unload your horse and the young lady's. *(to Giles)* Suppose you gather some firewood. We are drawing near to the foothills and the

nights will be colder than they have been.

GAWAIN:

Yes Sir. *(exits. Giles starts picking up sticks)*

MEDWYN:

Young lady, suppose you start supper.

MAIDA:

Er, I don't know how. Well, not camp supper. I can do it in a kitchen.

GEORGE,:

Here, allow me. *(hands her cooking pot)* I think I hear a stream over there. Fill that and then come back and lay out bedrolls. I'll cook.

*(She takes pot and exits. Gawain returns with an armload of blankets and what all. Maida returns in a minute and gives pot to George. Maida and Gwain start sorting out blankets. George starts messing with supper.)*

GILES: *(dropping sticks in a heap)*

I'm going to rub down the horses. *(exits)*

MAIDA: *(softly)*

You feel a lot better knowing that Medwyn is with us, don't you?

GAWAIN:

You bet!

MAIDA:

So do I!

*Blackout*

## Scene 6

### The Dragon's Lair

*Murky interior lighting. This is a rough cavern with a number of openings. One into the Dragon's chamber with a curtain over it. One into the witch's quarters which is a tunnel. There's an uncovered alcove at some point in the perimeter, a niche in which there is a "fire" upon which is a cauldron. There may be other exits as well, although only two others are actually used.*

*The Princess, her Ladies-in-Waiting and a number of knights (not in armor) stand and sit around the chamber on a number of large rocks. Everyone looks glum and a bit the worse for wear.*

*The Princess looks like a Princess. She is seated down left, a little apart from the others. She clutches a violin in her left hand. She sighs.*

*Two Ladies detach themselves from the others to attend her. These are Enid, the ingenue, tiny, dainty and pretty. She's about the same age as the Princess. And Emmy, several years younger, large, gawky and awkward. Enid is clearly Emmy's ideal, and she tends to imitate her with abominable results.*

ENID:

Oh, Please your Highness, don't sigh so!

PRINCESS: *(petulantly)*

How else am I supposed to sigh? I wish I'd never seen this hateful thing! *(glaring at the violin)* I ought to have just let it lie there!

ENID:

Now dear, you couldn't have guessed that it would cause so much trouble for everyone.

EMMY:

If I could play it, I would — whatever happened! And

they maybe we could all go home. I'd do anything to help!

PRINCESS:

Well it wouldn't matter if you could play it, for you know that I can't let go of it. When I used to read stories, I thought that being enchanted would be *exciting!* But it isn't. It's just *uncomfortable*. And it's dull, dull, dull.

*(she picks up the bow to the instrument and while Enid and Emmy wince and plug their ears, she drags it across the strings creating a horrible screech. There is a bellow of pain from the curtained chamber and a shriek from the tunnel.*

*From the chamber the dragon emerges. He is surprisingly small for a dragon, although still taller than everyone else in the chamber. He is a dull green color, and there is a distinct whine to his voice, although it is not an unpleasant voice in itself. His mother hobbles from the tunnel, she is an ancient crone, with a shrill screechy voice. She is also clearly a bully, and her son is clearly accustomed to knuckling under to her.)*

DRAGON: *(upset)*

Don't do that! Please don't do that. If you won't play it right, then don't try to play it at all. *(moans)* Oh my poor head. Now you've given me a headache. I think it's a migraine. Here I've tried to be very nice to you all and you won't even play me a nice, soothing melody.

WITCH:

What did you want to do that for! Hasn't my poor boy got enough trouble with his indigestion, without you deliberately giving him headaches as well!

DRAGON:

Mother, I want a headache potion!

WITCH:

It will upset your stomach! Do you want to exchange a headache for an upset stomach?

DRAGON:

It can't get any more upset that it is already. I want a headache potion.

WITCH:

All right then! Come on. But I warn you you will regret it. *(leads him to the entrance of the passage)* Why you chose to bring all of these interlopers into my nice clean lair, I will never understand. I could have told you it would be nothing but trouble.

First you brought those silly girls, and now all those useless boys have followed them. More, if you count those other chattering magpies. Well, I fixed them. And if you had any sense, you'd do something about the rest of these. Oh go on! I'll mix the potion when I get there.

DRAGON:

Yes, Mother. *(enters passage. Witch turns and surveys the crowd)*

WITCH:

And someone had better get their washing out of the back cavern and out into the sun. Things are bad enough without mildew as well. *(hobbles off. Everyone looks glum. Millicent sighs.)*

*[Production note: This scene and the following are to be played together. Suggested procedure:*

*'Millicent sighs.'*

*Blackout*

*Enter rescue party at back of auditorium under a follow spot. Lights come up on apron of stage. Backdrop may be lowered if desired. This one of a rocky mountain passage.]*

## Scene 7

### Mountain Pass

*George and Giles enter, in armor, swords drawn proceeding cautiously. Medwyn follows with staff, and saddlebag slung over one shoulder. Maida follows him clutching talisman, which is worn on a thong around her neck. Gawain brings up the rear, armed with a bread knife and with the cook pot on his head. He looks behind them often.*

GILES:

Are you sure this is the right way?

MEDWYN: *(testily)*

Of course I am. When I tell you that I can sense the presence of another magician a mile away, I mean that I can sense the presence of another magician a mile away. Either there is a rather powerful one, or there is a group of them well within that range.

GAWAIN:

Ye gads what a clod! You would think that the scorched patches, not to mention all those horses down in the meadow we just came from might have served as a clue!

GILES:

Well, if you are so sure that we're on the right track, why are the horses down there instead of up here? And where is all their armor and tack?

MAIDA:

Of all the stupid questions! I notice that you aren't on

horseback. What would the poor horses have to eat up here among all these rocks? Where would they get water?

GAWAIN:

Yes, fool. Even if they were brought up here to begin with, they'd go back to where they have food and water. They aren't stupid!

MAIDA:

After all, when any animal finds itself loose — *(stops short. She and George stare at each other unhappily.)* Oh! *(she covers her mouth with her hands, George goes to her and puts his arms around her.)*

GEORGE: *(to Giles and Gawain)*

Haven't we all got enough problems without fighting each other?

GAWAIN

Yeah. We ought to be thinking about how to fight the dragon.

MEDWYN: *(dryly)*

Assuming we ever get to the dragon.

MAIDA: *(gasps)*

Is that a cave?

GILES, GEORGE and GAWAIN:

What? Where? What do you see? Show me! *(etc)*

MAIDA: *(pointing)*

There. I can't tell for sure whether it is an entrance or just another twist in the trail.

*(Everyone cranes. Is solemn)*

GILES:

It sure looks like it could be a cave to me. *(gulps)*

MAIDA:

Oh George — do you have to? Can't we just run away, and leave the country, and never come back? Something?

GEORGE:

Maida, you know I can't do that. I effectively promised to try to rescue the Princess. I can't break my word. And I can't just leave my lands to fend for themselves either! It's a matter of honor!

MAIDA:

Oh, honor, honor, honor! I hate honor! It spoils everything! *(starts to cry)*

GAWAIN:

Oh don't start crying now. Nothing's happened yet!

GILES:

Yeah, buck up coz. Honor isn't so bad when you come right down to it —

MAIDA:

Giles, I hate you!

GEORGE:

Maida — Master Medwyn, can't you do anything?

MEDWYN: *(shrugs)*

Leave her alone. It will pass.

GEORGE:

But —

MAIDA: *(controlling herself)*

I'm all right.

*(Giles climbs up onto the stage and goes carefully to the cave entrance. The others follow cautiously.)*

GILES: *(with rather stilted dignity)*

Well, this is it. Good-by, coz. Thank you for everything Master Medwyn. *(looks at George)* Sorry about — you know. *(takes a deep breath and lowers his visor. Enters cave.)*

*George kisses Maida and walks to cave entrance. Turns back to address the others)*

GEORGE:

Keep watch, Gawain. Master Medwyn, if we need your help—

MEDWYN:

If you need my help you shall have it. And I will know when.

GEORGE:

Thank you, sir. *(Looks at Maida, seems about to speak, then lowers his visor and enters the cave. She dashes to the entrance after him and peers in clutching the talisman.)*

GAWAIN: *(after a moment)*

Come on sis, it isn't so bad. Medwyn's here. *(she reluctantly turns away from the cave entrance)*

MEDWYN: *(gives the two of them a look)*

Young lady, I need you to monitor the proceedings. *(he takes a mirror wrapped in silk from the saddlebag)* This will show you whatever you choose to see. Unless it's magically warded, of course. Your cousin and his friend certainly are not.

MAIDA:

How does it work?

MEDWYN:

You draw the cloth across the face of the mirror as you

tell it what or who want it to show you. Do so again when you want it to show you something else. And a third time when you want to put the mirror away. Be careful not to touch the face of the mirror with your fingers, however. Now, sit down, oh, over there, and tell me then they reach the cavern.

MAIDA:

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. *(she crosses back to the cave entrance, sits Draws the cloth across the mirror muttering; "George" and peers into the mirror intently. Gawain looks at Medwyn, consideringly)*

GAWAIN: *(after a moment, softly)*

Tell me, sir, is the Princess Millicent magically warded?

MEDWYN: *(Approvingly)*

Very good. *(softly, drawing Gawain a bit farther away from the cave entrance and Maida)* No, very much to my surprise, she isn't.

GAWAIN:

So you've known where she was from the beginning.

MEDWYN:

Well, not exactly where she was. I didn't hear of the abduction until an hour or two after it had happened, and by the time I looked for her they had already arrived at the dragon's lair. And, while I could see, I could not hear. So I cannot say for certain precisely what the situation is. I knew that she was not hurt. She did not appear to be in immediate danger. She wasn't happy, of course. But it was clear that the business is somewhat more... involved than everyone has been assuming. I admit I have no idea what became of his Majesty's heralds, but I suppose that

will be sorted out in the course of the rest.

GAWAIN:

Why didn't you say something!

MEDWYN:

One of the very first things that a magic worker learns, is that if he wishes to keep his head where it belongs, he will never attempt to meddle in affairs of state unasked.

GAWAIN:

I see. I mean – I think I really do see.

MEDWYN: *(nodding)*

Yes. Even volunteering information, can be... taken the wrong way. Do not misunderstand me. A kingdom can greatly benefit from having a magic worker on staff. Even if that isn't going to be the answer to all its potential problems. It took the King long enough to finally give me orders to do something about this matter. I suppose that's what I get for spending the last 30 years doing as little as possible.

GAWAIN:

So, it's a question of not looking to magic to solve things, until you find yourself in a situation where it is only magic that will solve things.

MEDWYN:

Yes, effectively. And, if I may venture a guess, I think the situation in which we find ourselves now was probably perpetrated by someone who is in the habit of deploying magic, first, before they have all the facts. This may take some unraveling.

GAWAIN:

So, George and Giles will probably not be walking into

the lair of a savage, hungry dragon?

MEDWYN:

From what I have been able to make out, I should think it unlikely. But then, you might have guessed as much for yourself.

GAWAIN:

I might? I can't see how.

MEDWYN:

Think, lad. How many knights have set out on the quest of delivering the Princess?

GAWAIN:

Eight, before George and Giles, that is.

MEDWYN:

Yes. And how many horses were there down in that meadow we just left?

GAWAIN:

Er... I didn't count them.

MEDWYN:

There are eight. Plus six pack mules, and a pair of donkeys. Unhurt. Unfrightened. Apparently unconcerned — in a meadow at said dragon's doorstep.

GAWAIN:

Oh! That's — really odd, actually.

MEDWYN:

Yes. It is, rather. Somewhere in this puzzle, I am still missing a key piece of information. *(sighs)* Well, we shall just have to trust that it will come out in the course of the hullabaloo. They ought to be reaching the cavern any moment now.

*(Maida leaps to her feet and wipes the mirror with the cloth)*

MADIA:

They're there! Here! *(she gives the mirror back to Medwyn)* I'm going after them! *(to Gawain)* You can't stop me! If I don't, I might as well have stayed at the palace. *(dashes into the cave)*

MEDWYN:

A remarkably stubborn young lady. But she's quite safe, I assure you. Well, we might as well be on our way, also.

GAWAIN:

Shouldn't we hurry?

MEDWYN:

No particular need. Our entire party is secure enough for the present, if somewhat scattered. But I rather think my efforts will be needed soon.

*(they enter the cave)*

*Blackout*

*If there is an intermission here, the stage curtain will be lowered. If not, it is the usual procedure for a scene change.*

## Scene 8

### The Dragon's Cave

*Same as Scene 6.*

*Princess and her attendants are as we left them. As is the rest of the crowd. George and Giles enter. They stop short and put up their visors as they stare at the crowd of knights and ladies all alive and unhurt. Enid spots them first.*

ENID:

Millicent! Here are two more!

*(Princess rises and greets them regally, clutching the violin. George remembers to bow, Giles doesn't until he sees George doing it. He straightens and gawks about)*

PRINCESS:

How do you do? Please don't stand on ceremony. I am hardly holding court, and we are all very informal here.

GILES:

Are all of you here?

ENID:

Yes, unless some more knights have set out. They haven't got here yet.

GEORGE:

Are you all — er, all right? Um, your Royal Highness, that is.

PRINCESS:

We are all well, and not in any grave danger. But since that is all I can tell you truthfully, that's all I will say on the matter.

EMMY:

How can you say that Millicent, after — *(claps hand over her mouth)*

GILES:

What? After what?

GEORGE:

Your Royal Highness, if you will forgive me, we have come to do our best to restore you to your parents, and we would — that is, it would be best if —

GILES:

We'd kind of like to know what we are getting into.

*(enter Maida, out of breath, Millicent sees her and recognizes her at once)*

PRINCESS:

Maida! Is that you? What are you doing here!

MAIDA:

Millicent! Are you all right? Your father has offered your hand in marriage and all these southern lands to anyone who rescues you and brings you home.

PRINCESS:

He hasn't!

MAIDA:

What's wrong? Don't you want to be rescued?

PRINCESS:

It isn't that! This complicates everything horribly. Besides, if a lot more knights come one or other of them may kill the dragon!

GILES:

Isn't that the idea?

PRINCESS:

You don't understand! If the dragon is killed, I'm afraid the enchantment might never be broken.

MAIDA:

Enchantment?

*(enter Gawain, he spots George and Giles)*

GAWAIN:

Have you killed him?

GILES:

No. We haven't even found him yet.

EMMY:

Hi Gawain! I didn't expect to see you! *(Gawain pretends not to have seen or heard, but his distress is evident. Through the rest of the scene Emmy gradually pursues Gawain around the cavern, until he eventually takes refuge with Medwyn.)*

GEORGE: *(to Gawain)*

Where is Medwyn?

GAWAIN:

Coming. He told me I might as well run on ahead.

PRINCESS:

Is Medwyn here? Then there may be a chance!

GAWAIN:

Chance of what?

GILES:

To kill the dragon, what else! Where is he? Which way did he go?

GEORGE:

Who?

EMMY: *(popping in)*

Felix. *(the newcomers all stare at her)* That's his name! He went to his mother's cave for a headache potion. *(pointing)* That way.

MAIDA:

His mother? There are two of them?

GILES:

Then let's go! Come on George, we'll be heroes yet!

GEORGE: *(as Giles starts hustling him toward the passage)*

Hey! Wait a minute!

GILES:

Don't hang back Georgie!

PRINCESS:

Oh, stop! Stop! Wait!

*(George, Giles and the dragon all collide at entrance to the passage. Giles is first to recover)*

GILES:

Stand and fight! Or surrender, foul serpent of the southern wilds! We challenge you to battle in the name of the Princess Millicent! *(to George)* Pull yourself together, we outnumber him!

*(Dragon stares in disbelief, then bursts into a roar of laughter)*

DRAGON:

I thought that I'd seen everything! Now we've got one who tries to knock me down with a blast of hot air! Stop waving those swords around. Someone is likely to get hurt. Put them away. I'm not fighting you. Not now, not tomorrow, not fighting. *(Giles stares at him speechless. Gawain stares for a moment and also bursts out laughing.)*

GEORGE: *(politely)*

So you surrender?

DRAGON:

No, but I'm not fighting either. My lair, my rules! Put the swords away. There's too much of a crowd here, someone will get hurt. You might as well get out of that armor as well. You won't need it. You can store it in the back cavern with the rest.

GILES: *(sputtering like a motorboat)*

But— but—!

DRAGON:

But nothing! You came here, uninvited. Here you will stay. I'll have your solemn oath not to stray off farther than the meadow to tend to your horses until the Princess is disenchanting. Oh, you will be quite all right — (breaks off) Wait a minute. How many of you are there? (they look at one another bewildered) Oh, all right, I'll count you myself. Let's see; we've got ten of the one kind and eight of the others... (pointing to George, Giles, and Gawain in turn) nine, ten, eleven. (*spots Maida*) Twelve. (*takes another look*) No. Eleven of each. Mother will kill me.

All right. Who is the leader of this group?

GEORGE:

Er, I suppose I am.

DRAGON:

And just who are you?

GEORGE:

Sir George of Nashbury.

DRAGON:

Very well then. Do you swear, Sir George of Nashbury, upon your solemn oath that you and your party will remain here in my domain straying no farther than the meadow, until the Princess frees herself from my enchantment? (*they look at one another*)

GILES:

Oh, go ahead.

GEORGE:

I do so swear.

DRAGON:

Very well. Please understand that this isn't anything

personal. I don't want to be unpleasant. But if I let people leave, they may come back. And, who, or what they may bring with them is anyone's guess. So, it is really much safer for everyone this way. (*rubs his stomach*) Mother was right. It is more upset. I'm going to lie down. Please don't disturb me.

(*goes into his own cavern. There is a short silence*)

PRINCESS:

I was afraid of that.

GEORGE: (*to Millicent*)

He spoke of an enchantment. You appear to be perfectly normal.

PRINCESS: (*sighs*)

When he brought me and my ladies here he demanded that I play for him. I refused.

GILES:

Why did you do that? I mean, you must put a lot of store by the old thing, you haven't set it down once.

GAWAIN:

Giles, for pity's sake, we're finally getting some information, don't interrupt!

PRINCESS:

I didn't play for him because I don't know how. It isn't my violin. It's Master Trebleworth's. I just picked it up when he dropped it.

GEORGE:

Didn't you tell him that?

PRINCESS:

Weelll, I was rather upset at the time, and didn't think

of that. In fact, I threw a bit of a tantrum, and told him I would never play for him, so he might as well go ahead and eat me.

MAIDA:

What happened then?

PRINCESS:

He went into a snit and cast an enchantment that I wouldn't be able to let go of it until I played it. Then he cast another one on all of us, so none of us can leave until the first enchantment is broken. And then he went to his room to sulk.

MAIDA:

Can't anyone leave?

PRINCESS:

Well, I suppose the knights could. But they all —

MAIDA:

Yes, yes, all right. I've noticed a funny thing about honor. It's either forcing you to do things that you would never do otherwise, or it somehow makes you do exactly what you've already decided you want to anyway.

PRINCESS:

Maida, why are you here? I thought that you were safe in the palace with a head cold.

MAIDA:

I came because of George.

PRINCESS:

Didn't George come because of this new proclamation?

MAIDA:

Oh — tell her!

GAWAIN:

We've all here because Giles here is a moron. *(He takes the pot off his head, puts the bread knife in it and sets it down out of the way. Millicent looks puzzled)* You see, George and Maida had decided to marry, and George came to the court to ask the King's blessing, since Maida was living at court, rather than at home. I knew about it, since they wanted someone to sound out what mother and father might think of their plans, and who would be more qualified? Well, our parents seemed to approve, so George came to court and Giles came with him.

MAIDA:

That was a big mistake!

GAWAIN:

I'll say. The herald read out the proclamation about how whoever brought you home would be entitled to your hand in marriage and all these southern lands. So Giles here, like the idiot he is, volunteered George!

PRINCESS:

But, I don't understand. We don't rule these southern lands.

MAIDA:

I say! What happened to your father's heralds?

GILES:

What heralds?

MAIDA:

The heralds the King sent out with all the other questing knights. Where are they?

EMMY:

That's another enchantment.

GILES:

Another one? How many did this dragon cast?

EMMY:

Oh, his mother cast this one. But it gets broken when the Princess breaks hers, too.

GEORGE:

What is that one?

ENID:

Well, you see, all the knights set out within a week of each other, so they all showed up at about the same time. None of the heralds came all the way into the cave, so they got away without being seen. But the dragon's mother found out and cast a spell tied to the Knights' oaths that they and their parties wouldn't go farther than the meadow, which turned them into magpies once they got beyond that point. I suppose the spell was cast quickly enough to catch them all before they reached the palace.

GAWAIN:

So everything is tied to the first spell, about the Princess playing the violin.

EMMY:

That's right.

MAIDA:

What's keeping Medwyn? I would have thought he'd be here by now.

ENID:

Perhaps someone ought to warn him what's happened.

GAWAIN:

I'll bet he already knows.

MAIDA:

But maybe he doesn't.

GAWAIN:

He's got that mirror.

MAIDA:

You can't hear anything in the mirror! And he may not be using it!

GILES:

Maybe someone ought to go.

MAIDA:

I intend to! *(starts off toward the exit)*

*(Dragon reappears from his chamber, witch hobbles from the passage to her quarters)*

DRAGON:

Less noise, please!

WITCH:

One of them is leaving!

DRAGON:

You! Come back here! *(Maida stops short. Turns back, and looks from dragon to witch. Is very startled by the witch. Both dragon and witch start towards her. She turns and bolts toward the exit. Witch raises her cane and points it.)*

GEORGE and GAWAIN:

Maida! STOP! *(she stops at the exit and turns back terrified.)*

WITCH: *(to dragon)*

You see! You can't trust anyone! *(gives a double-take. Shrieks)* These are new ones! Do you mean to tell me that they are still coming? There are going to be more of them?

GILES:

There's a new proclamation out.

DRAGON: *(in a panic)*

What!

WITCH: *(in a rage)*

What!

MAIDA:

Giles, will you never learn to keep your mouth shut!

WITCH:

That does it! That is the last straw! I told you keeping these people here was a piece of foolishness from beginning to end! I will not have these useless lumps sitting about like unpaying guests, eating up our provisions. You should start eating them! And you can begin with that one! *(indicating Maida)*

DRAGON:

Er... I'd rather not. I couldn't possibly eat a whole one! *(indignant)* And you're the one who's told me all my life that people were for ruling, not for eating!

WITCH:

Well, we aren't running a hotel! All right, don't eat them. Just get them out from underfoot. Turn them into frogs, something smaller and not so much trouble. Oh, never mind. If you want a thing done properly, do it yourself. *(she crosses to the niche with the cauldron, tends the fire)* You go to my workroom and bring me my basket.

DRAGON: *(miserably)*

Yes, mother. *(Goes into passage the rest of the group drift around, worried)*

ENID:

Isn't there anything we can do?

GAWAIN:

Where's Medwyn?

MAIDA:

What's keeping him?

*(dragon returns from witch's passage carrying a good-sized basket. Crosses to cauldron and looks in)*

WITCH: *(impatiently)*

Yes, there's enough! Go ahead! *(dragon unhappily starts taking things from basket and adding them to cauldron)*

DRAGON:

Lizard's tongue, toad's eye, devil's root...

WITCH:

Where is the dwarf hair?

DRAGON:

Mother, please, I'd rather do it myself.

WITCH:

And botch it deliberately, too! They aren't pets. Now, fetch the dwarf hair.

DRAGON:

Yes, mother. *(meekly returns to passage, witch turns her back on the room, and busies herself with the cauldron and the rest of the items in her basket)*

*(Medwyn appears at entrance to the cave. Signals for silence. He looks around, sniffs the air, frowns, shakes his head, then takes something from his saddlebag, and as everyone watches in suspense, walks quietly over to the cauldron and drops something into it.)*

MEDWYN:

That will be enough of that.

WITCH: (*shrieks*)

How dare you!

MEDWYN:

Ophelia. I'll admit this is a bit of a surprise. I thought you were off being a Baroness these days.

WITCH:

Princess, I'll have you know!

MEDWYN:

Ah. Yes, of course. With you to help him, I imagine your husband would have had very little difficulty dominating his neighbors. That's one part of the puzzle answered.

DRAGON: (*emerging from passage*)

Mother, there isn't any dwarf hair.

WITCH:

Never mind the dwarf hair! Deal with him! (*indicating Medwyn*)

DRAGON:

Er, just what do you want me to do with him?

MEDWYN: (*regarding the dragon with consideration*)

And this raises more questions than it answers.

GAWAIN: (*to Medwyn*)

You didn't expect to find, er, Ophelia here?

MEDWYN:

She was magically warded. I couldn't see her. I couldn't see the dragon either, but I didn't expect to be able to do that. Dragons are inherently magical.

PRINCESS:

Master Medwyn. I don't understand my father's proclamation. How can he be offering these lands to whoever rescues me from the dragon when he's never claimed these lands.

MEDWYN:

Your father knows only that the self-proclaimed former ruler of these lands died some years back. He is no doubt under the impression that the lands are unclaimed, and expected that the people here would no doubt be grateful to be delivered from the dragon. Obviously, this is a misapprehension. (*to witch*) No one ever reported the existence of a child.

GILES: (*to dragon*)

Why were you flying over our royal parkland anyway?

DRAGON:

Oh, that. We have a crop blight. I'd been trying to see how widespread it had gone. And then I thought I'd check and see whether it was affecting your fields as well.

MEDWYN:

The black spot?

DRAGON:

Yes, that's right. I didn't see any sign of it once I passed the border.

MEDWYN:

No, that's a simple enough one to clear. I'll give your mother the formula.

DRAGON:

Oh, thank you! Well, anyway, I flew for some time, and then I heard the music. Beautiful music. I thought

that would be just the thing for when I was having one of my bad turns. I swooped down and everyone started screaming, and calling for the guards, and I didn't want that, so I brought them all back here where we could discuss the matter in private.

MAIDA:

But see here — *(to dragon)* You're a dragon!

DRAGON:

Um. Yes.

MAIDA:

Your mother isn't.

DRAGON:

Well, no.

MAIDA:

People don't have baby dragons!

WITCH:

Oh, that. Not that it is any of your business. Of course he wasn't born a dragon. I could see at a glance that we would never manage to raise him. Poor weak sickly little thing. Such a disappointment! And he'd certainly never manage to hold the lands that his father put so much effort into consolidating. So I turned him into a dragon. Dragons don't die of the croup. Or the measles, or any of those things. And, as a dragon, he would live to rule these lands, oh, perhaps for centuries. Dragons live a very long time. He flies over to the castle every week to discuss affairs of state with his councilors.

GEORGE:

But if he is the ruler of these lands, why does he not live

at his castle?

WITCH: *(sighs)*

His father and I finally realized that it would be better this way. Most of the court found him much too alarming, and it was all very awkward. So I brought him here to raise him in seclusion, myself. A supply wagon comes as far as the meadow every week.

GILES:

Isn't that terribly inconvenient? I mean, it may have saved his life then, but really, wouldn't it just be simpler for everyone for you to turn him back?

WITCH:

You cannot enchant a dragon, you fool! They are far too magical.

MEDWYN:

Thank you. I think I may understand what is going on now. *(to George)* I take it your mission was a failure.

GEORGE:

Completely. Oh. I'm afraid we've got another complication. I have given my promise that none of us will go farther than the meadow until the Princess frees herself from her enchantment. If we do we turn into maggots. That also lasts until the Princess is no longer enchanted.

MEDWYN:

Since I have no intention of leaving before the Princess is no longer enchanted, I do not think you need concern yourself with that unduly. *(Enid, Emmy, Maida and Giles all start to describe the enchantment.)* No, don't tell me anything more. I heard it all while I was waiting in the

passage. (to dragon) As to this enchantment; it is serving no useful purpose. I can tell you with all honesty that the Princess has no idea of how to play a violin.

DRAGON:

She cannot play the violin.

MEDWYN:

She cannot play the violin.

DRAGON: *(to Princess)*

Why didn't you tell me so?

PRINCESS:

I did. You wouldn't believe me.

DRAGON:

Oh. That's right. I suppose you did. I apologize.

WITCH:

Not only a weakling, but a bungler. How his father and I produced such a child I'll never know.

MEDWYN:

And apart from all that, the enchantment has produced nothing, will produce nothing and you have achieved nothing by it but a number of unwanted house guests. Do remove it, please.

DRAGON:

Well, I would, but I can't.

GILES:

You mean you can cast spells but you can't take them off? That's stupid.

DRAGON:

No, no. It's not that! It's the kind of enchantment itself. The one I used has to be broken from inside. The spell isn't on me.

MEDWYN: *(rubbing his eyes)*

A class B spell. People will keep using those. Well it presents a problem. We will hope not an insurmountable one.

*(He goes over to a convenient rock, sits, takes his spell book from his saddlebag and starts searching through it. Gawain drifts over and watches over his shoulder.)*

EMMY:

You mean we can't ever go home?

GILES: *(to Princess)*

How well do you have to be able to play the violin?  
*(Medwyn looks up)*

MEDWYN:

Hold that thought. *(to dragon)* Tell me, to the best of your recollection, does the Princess have to play the violin, or does the violin merely have to be played?

DRAGON:

I can't remember. I was in a temper at the time. I'm not sure exactly what I said.

MEDWYN:

Well, it's worth trying. *(he flips pages of his book, until he comes to a place. Pauses while he reads it over. Then stands and looks around)* Ah. That ought to do *(indicating the niche with the cauldron in it)* Do you have something that you can hang to cover that opening. The vapors need to be contained. *(turns to Gawain indicating the cook pot)* You, boy. Take that pot and fill it with water. *(to dragon)* I gather there is a water source somewhere here in the caverns? *(dragon nods)* In the meantime, take the cauldron out of the way and dump it somewhere safely.

EMMY: *(to Gawain)*

Here, give it to me. You don't know where anything is.

*(Takes pot off-stage. At a look from the Princess, a couple of the knights haul the cauldron out the entrance of the cave. They can return at any point during the following sequence.)*

WITCH: *(suspiciously)*

What are you going to do.

MEDWYN:

Rid you of a lot of unwanted guests — if this works. *(to dragon)* Something to hang over the opening? *(dragon exits to his own chamber and returns with a large cloak.)* Yes, that ought to do. Hang it over that opening if you will.

*(Dragon fixes the cloak over the alcove. Emmy returns carrying pot very carefully. The witch huffs and stomps off into her chambers.)*

EMMY:

Here it is. Is this enough?

MEDWYN:

Yes, that ought to do. *(to dragon)* This needs to go on the fire. *(he starts digging through the saddlebag and pulls out a bundle of herbs. He goes through them, removing some from the bundle, and returning others to the bag. To Princess)* The herbs are quite harmless, They only serve to activate the spell.

GAWAIN:

What are they?

MEDWYN: *(hesitates)*

No matter.

GAWAIN:

What is it supposed to do?

MEDWYN: *(considers, then comes to a decision)*

It's a general enhancement procedure. Whatever the steam comes in contact with will react with the spell, which will improve it immeasurably. Since sound travels through the air, it ought to work.

PRINCESS:

So when I start trying to play the violin, the noises will become music.

MEDWYN:

Well that is certainly what ought to happen. At worst, it ought to simply not work. We will just have to hope.

EMMY:

And then we can all go home!

MEDWYN:

These effects do tend toward the permanent. You may always be able to play this particular violin after this. Possibly only the one tune, however.

ENID:

Oh, Millicent! Won't your mother be pleased! My mother has always told me that music is one of the nicest accomplishments a young lady can cultivate.

PRINCESS: *(smiling radiantly)*

Yes! My mother has been trying to teach me the lute — but I am all thumbs.

*(Medwyn enters the alcove and soon returns.)*

MEDWYN:

It's not a large pot, and the herbs will accelerate the boiling. So this shouldn't take long. Now, remember that

if the spell does work, as soon as it does its job, return immediately. There is no point in trying to become a virtuoso. It won't happen. But you ought to be able to get one tune out of it.

PRINCESS: *(slightly frightened)*

Is there danger?

MEDWYN:

Not to you personally. Not that there isn't a risk. It's a healing spell, designed for living creatures. There is a chance that the violin may crack. I'm sure you don't want it shattering while you play it. You would be left clutching a violin which couldn't be played forever after. But that is not a very likely result.

*(he walks up to the curtained alcove, raises his staff and makes a number of mystic-seeming passes with his free hand. Then slams the end of the staff down on the floor. He nods to the Princess.)*

ENID: *(prettily worried)*

Remember to come straight out!

EMMY: *(in much the same manner, but on her is isn't pretty)*

Yes! Straight out!

*(Gawain and Giles attempt to be gentlemen and hold the curtain for her. Getting in each other's way and glaring. Maida does the honors. The Princess slips behind the curtain and the horrid sawing starts, then rapidly mutates into a pretty tune, vaguely medieval, but not "Greensleeves".)*

DRAGON: *(delighted)*

AH! *(turns and rushes into his own chamber)*

PRINCESS: *(re-entering)*

Did you hear me?

MAIDA and ENID:

Yes! It was lovely!

EMMY:

It was so beyootiful! Wasn't it Gawain? *(He suddenly realizes that she has managed to edge her way over next to him again. He moves away.)*

GILES: *(restored to good humor)*

Problems, coz?

GAWAIN: *(with gritted teeth)*

Yes.

GILES:

Have Ophelia turn her into a toad.

GAWAIN:

Back into a toad.

PRINCESS: *(laughing)*

And best of all! I can finally let go of it! *(she hands it to Enid and starts stretching and rubbing her fingers. There is laughter and congratulations. Medwyn, nods in satisfaction, goes to sit, flips to the back of his book and starts making notes.)*

MAIDA: *(looking around)*

I say! Where's the dragon? *(Dragon re-enters, now wearing a coronet and short gold cape)*

DRAGON:

I keep my promises, too.

PRINCESS: *(horrified)*

OH! *(Medwyn looks up.)*

GEORGE:

What is it?

DRAGON: *(completely unaware of the havoc he is raising)*

When I discovered that Millicent was the Princess of the neighboring kingdom, I promised that if her music could make me forget my health, I would marry her and make her co-ruler of all my lands.

PRINCESS:

Oh, now what am I going to do! This is worse than before!

GAWAIN:

Why didn't you tell us?

PRINCESS:

I had forgotten it!

MAIDA:

How could you possibly forget?

PRINCESS:

I don't know!

MAIDA: *(stomping up to the dragon)*

Is this another of your stupid enchantments?

DRAGON: *(on his dignity)*

Absolutely not! One does not cast spells in order to marry!

GAWAIN: *(to Princess)*

Why didn't you just tell him no?

DRAGON:

What she said, was that she wouldn't play the violin, and that I might as well go ahead and eat her. *(All look at him)* She was rather upset. I don't hold it against her.

MAIDA:

Well, surely you can see that she can't marry a dragon!

You will just have to withdraw your proposal.

PRINCESS:

I'm not really sure he can.

MAIDA:

What do you mean?

PRINCESS: *(miserably)*

A Prince must never break his word.

GEORGE:

That's right. You are a Prince, as well.

MAIDA:

Honor again!

GILES:

Well she can certainly refuse!

GAWAIN: *(at the same time)*

What if you improved the dragon?

EVERYONE: *(reacting to Gawain)*

WHAT!?

GILES:

How is that supposed to help anything?

GAWAIN:

I don't know. It was just a thought.

EMMY: *(to dragon)*

It might settle your stomach!

MAIDA:

It's not like he was really a dragon...

DRAGON:

I am so really a dragon!

MAIDA:

Well you weren't born a dragon.

DRAGON:

Can you cast the spell again?

MEDWYN:

I don't need to cast the spell again. It will keep building until the pot boils dry. Mind you, I doubt that it will do anything. At best, you might come out of there a rather more healthy dragon.

DRAGON:

Well that would be something.

GEORGE: *(to dragon)*

You know, we all do rather owe you some sort of service for not eating any of us. And for letting us all stay here at your expense. Even if we didn't exactly set out to stay here permanently. *(to Medwyn)* After all, you did say that the spell wasn't dangerous to the person who used it. Even if it wasn't designed for violins.

MEDWYN:

It isn't designed for inherently magical creatures, either. It wouldn't do for him to lose track of who he is. And the longer that pot boils the stronger the enchantment grows. There could be an over-reaction.

DRAGON: *(looks at Princess)*

I'll risk that.

*(steps behind the curtain. There is an indistinct murmur from behind it. After a moment there is a muffled \*boom\* and silence. Smoke effects may be added if wanted, too.)*

PRINCESS: *(gasps)*

Oh no! *(begins to weep)* He always did try to be kind.

ENID:

Oh dear! *(joins her ins quiet weeping)*

EMMY: *(with loud blubbing sniff)*

He would have been sweet if his stomach didn't give him so much trouble!

MAIDA: *(in a very small voice)*

I'm sorry I yelled at him like that.

GILES: *(overly-hearty)*

Oh, come on coz, no one holds it against you!

MAIDA: *(bursting out into angry tears)*

Giles! For once in your life, SHUT UP! I wish to heaven that someone would improve you! *(wipes her eyes. George puts an arm around her. She leans on him. Medwyn sighs and goes back to his notes)*

GAWAIN:

He's coming out!

PRINCESS:

I can't look!

GILES:

You've seen him before! He won't be any worse!

*(from behind the curtain steps a tall handsome prince wearing the dragon's cape and coronet. His clothing should be as close to the same green as the dragon costume as possible. Ideally this should be the same actor. But if it won't work, it can't be helped. Try to cast someone with a similar voice.)*

FELIX: *(rather stunned, very shy)*

I'm not sure I ever really liked being a dragon, anyway.

MEDWYN: *(very surprised)*

I'd be interested in hearing how you managed this!

FELIX:

Well, I didn't want to lose track of who I am either. I stated my name, and my parents' names, and my grandparents' names as far back as I could remember. It was all perfectly true! For a while the steam just sort of clung to me – and then suddenly there was a \*bang\* and I realized that my hands had gone pink and weren't scaly any more. And I was wearing shoes. And my headache was gone!

MAIDA:

Millicent! Look! (she peeks over to Felix, who gives her a very uncertain smile.)

MEDWYN:

You do realize that this is probably permanent.

FELIX: (*earnestly*)

Oh, I do hope so! Although I'll miss being able to fly.

MEDWYN:

You will probably miss being able to cast spells whenever you feel like it, too. Well, you can break the news to Ophelia.

FELIX:

We can go back to the castle!

MEDWYN:

I imagine that would be the best idea. I rather suspect that your councilors may require closer watching once they no longer recall that you could easily bite off their heads. I expect that you will discover a certain degree of misappropriation as well. You are going to have your work cut out for you. Ophelia will probably be of great assistance.

GILES: (*to Medwyn*)

Well! It looks like your quest was the one that finally succeeded. Good show!

MEDWYN:

My quest? Excuse me, but I am here upon the orders of the King. I never undertook any quest.

GEORGE:

Don't look at me! My quest was a complete failure. All I accomplished was to potentially turn us all into magpies.

PRINCESS:

Magpies!

GILES:

Now what?

PRINCESS:

The magpies are all heralds again! They'll tell father that I am enchanted and trapped in the dragon's cave!

GAWAIN:

Not until they manage to get down from the roof.

PRINCESS:

Master Medwyn, can you send him word?

MEDWYN:

I had already made made arrangements for that, your Highness.

GILES:

But the King's proclamation—

PRINCESS:

My father had no business making proclamations about the disposal of other people's lands. And so I will tell him, myself.

GAWAIN:

As for the proclamation, I'd say the Princess saved herself. Medwyn just gave her what she needed to do it.

*(Witch stomps out of the passage)*

WITCH: *(demanding)*

I know I heard that girl play a tune. Why are you people all still here? Explosions! Shouting! Go home! All of you!

FELIX:

Mother! We're all going home. *(She stares at him in shock)* We'll ride back with the supply wagon, when it gets here.

WITCH:

Felix? Is that you?

FELIX:

It's me, mother.

WITCH:

You... you look just like your father!

MEDWYN:

I should think that packing would be in order. The King ought to have my message by now. He will send carriages for the ladies. If each of you gentlemen takes a lady pillion, leaving in the morning we can reach the nearest inn by mid-afternoon tomorrow, and wait for proper transportation in rather more comfort. In fact, if you leave your armor here, to be shipped back later, and go now, we may reach the inn some time before dark this evening. *(to Felix)* I cannot make any predictions, you realize, but I would imagine that you ought to be hearing from King Karlus in due time. There has been a great deal of confu-

sion as to just whose authority these lands are under. I rather think that he was looking forward to having the matter settled in his favor, but he's a reasonable man. Oh, before I forget... *(sits back down and starts scribbling in his book. Knights and ladies start filing out of the cave.)*

FELIX: *(looking at the Princess)*

I would not rule that possibility out, altogether. I would not be averse to opening diplomatic relations. I should think a mutual agreement might yet be reached.

PRINCESS:

As my father's heir, I think I can safely agree to that, at the very least. *(She smiles, and then leaves with the others.)*

*(Medwyn rips out the page, packs the book back into the saddlebag and rises. He turns to Felix and Ophelia and hands Ophelia the page.)*

MEDWYN:

For the black spot. *(exits)*

*Blackout.*



## COLOPHON:

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