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Long ago there lived a dragon. He didn't do harm anyone, and nobody saw him. But people were afraid of him and his creepy castle. In the castle, there was a noise all the time, scaring its hiss and clang. The wise king, tired of the complaints of his curious and restless nobles and peasants, issued a decree: anyone who managed to sneak into the castle and tame the dragon would get married the king's daughter and got half of the Kingdom as a wedding present. A young Page, who had been in love with the Princess for many years, said to his Sister:

- I will go to the dragon castle!

People just laughed at him.

The first day of the siege. A crowd of villagers gathered to watch the dragon castle.

- I wonder what's inside.

- Wealth? Treasure?

- A Horde of monsters? Sounds like the dragon is having lots of fun with them.

- Nobody has been able to capture this fortress, - said one man. - And anyone will not succeed.

- Who knows, - said the Page.

- Oh! Of course, **you** got inside! - grinned the crowd with fun.

Page's Sister, noticed a silhouette in the window of the castle and shouted: "Dragon!" He was attracted by a noise outside. On the other side the onlookers shouted: "Prince!" and everyone looked down. The first brave man proudly paced in a sturdy polished armor, the soldiers behind carrying a long battering RAM. The crowd admired. Under the complacent laughter of the Prince, the soldiers shot at the goal. Now the dragon was laughing, because the battering RAM had shattered into splinters on impact.

- It's ridiculous. - said Page.

- Then you go! You will get it better! - baiting the crowd.

- No, I'm not ready yet.

The second day. The second Prince. His armor sparkled, and the RAM was heavier as it was of iron. This would not break. The soldiers beat the gate, and the crowd marveled: "The soldiers burst into the Palace of the dragon in two minutes!"

- I think so, - quietly said the Sister. The shadow of the dragon flashed between the pillars, and the head of a RAM caught in a door's toothed trap door. RAM was stuck. But then the trap opened, releasing the prey and the RAM of inertia was hit by the second Prince and pressed his weight to the tired soldiers.

The third day.

- Well, still ready to storm the Palace? - baiting the crowd.

- Yes. I am watching.

- Meanwhile, others have power and they work! - scoffed the crowd. The third Prince in shining armor and feathers brought cannons and gave the command to attack. The shells effortlessly destroyed the teeth of the several walls, pillars, the sculptures of the facade and the roof of one of the towers. From that tower with a clang and clicks rose monster with a long neck and a silver beak. The Prince had stopped smiling and was ordered to reinforce the fire. But no matter how many cores had departed, none had done more damage to the castle - the beast, pulling an infinitely long neck, caught and swallowed them. Turning backwards, it shot the projectiles back, gradually destroying all the cannons and paying the army to flight.

The fourth day.

- So, you still haven't stormed the castle? - funned the crowd.

- No. I am thinking.

- And this is already does something.

The Princes failed to destroy the walls. Next one, in the armor of variegated needles, decided to climb those walls. The soldiers built a tall platform, up to the walls of the castle, and it slowly approached, when the Prince stomped at the bottom. The crowd was delighted and immediately froze with a shocked whisper: "But that's impossible!" The Palace was quiet, but the ground around quivered, the walls began to grow. Castle stood up and the height of the platform was already greatly missed. Soldiers, Prince - all

indignant, but it was not enough: the gate at a new height opened, and clawed metal pole pushed the wooden structure. It collapsed with the soldiers and broke.

The fifth day. The crowd is not so fun, but someone already had taken bets on the next Challenger.

- So, have you abandoned the assault of the dragon's castle?

- Never! - loudly replied the Page. - I will find a way!

- You're late, - smiled the crowd. - The castle is now on fire.

- Stupid! It was necessary to conquer, not destroy!

- No, the main thing that the dragon will burn.

The talks died down when the soldiers of the new Prince released fire arrows. The flame covered the walls, a few towers and the wings of a windmill, highest in the castle. The crowd breathlessly watched as the fire consumed the stone and steel. A black silhouette of the dragon flashed in the sparkling haze. The Palace buzzed. Many birds of prey lifted their heads and stretched their necks - from their beaks there came water, irrigating the rain and extinguishing fires inside the castle. The dragon flashed again. The wings of the mill could not be saved, and they unwound stronger. After that, a glowing fiery disc was separated from the tower and walked around the army behind the wall, scaring away the ordinary people.

- After this terrible disaster, no one will dare to go there. - A crowd homesick.

- I will. - said Page. Under the disbelieving eyes of the crowd he went to the castle on foot. - I think I can do that.

- The dragon will be surprised. - cheered the crowd. - Brave Boy armed to the teeth! Look at his sharp knife.

The Page stopped in front of the castle, unfastened the only weapon he had, and slowly laid it on the ground. He had no army, no armor, no weapon to attack the dragon. The crowd were perplexed and then said, "He really goes there! Don't be stupid!" But the Page didn't listen, he walked up to the gate and knocked.

- May I come in?

The gate silently opened for the young man. The crowd were in shock. The owner of the castle was much taller than the Page, his armor of black metal elaborately carved scales, plate gauntlets – claws, long coat and a dragon helmet.

- You're the first who guessed just to ask me for permission to enter, - the Dragon laughed by a deep pleasant voice. He bowed, - Welcome. Do you want to see my Palace?

The Page was happy. Firstly, the Dragon showed his beautiful library. It stored a rich collection of drawings and manuscripts from all over the world. He held the guest in the drawing room, where the Dragon used to draw diagrams of his inventions and mechanisms. Then the Page saw an incredible Studio, where the Dragon gathered his machines, like those that had defended the castle. The force of an underground river twisted millstones and gave life to his outlandish devices. The dragon took the Page to the garden, where he grew fruit and vegetables, wholesome herbs. He had established a system of mirrors so they got the sun enough. And the last point of the tour was a great underground lake, which is beneficial in the event of a fire, but the Dragon used that grotto for fun. That place was great and dark, the glitter of precious stones and wonderful minerals in the stone ceiling gave it a mysterious magical look. The Page was breathless from such beauty.

- This place is amazing and safe. – the voice of the Page was quiet and reverent. the Dragon was a little confused. – Can you take that helmet off? I want to see your face.

The dragon was young and pleasant with a little bristle. He said that he didn't expect guests today, so he was in a mess. The Page smiled and said: "Well, I like it." That made the Dragon confused even more. He was always alone in this castle. Suddenly, the grotto was filled with a solemn sound of tubes.

- What is it?

- It's the alert system. It transmits noise from the outside. You won the Princess and they came for you. The tour is over, - the Dragon smiled sadly.

When the Page had come up the wall he saw a dressy escort at a great distance from the castle. Just in case.

- Young Page! - shouted the Herald. – The king is true to his word! And now we are ready to escort you to the Princess! To your bride!

The crowd cheered: "Long live the hero!" But the young man was in no hurry to join the fun. He raised his hand, calling for silence.

- I thank His Majesty the King and pay my respects to the Princess! - He shouted from the height of the wall. - But I'm not getting married!

The crowd opened their mouths, and the Page removed the wig and dissolved wonderfully soft long hair. Now the owner of the castle opened his mouth, standing in the shadows.

- The hand of the Princess, that king gave me, I gave my brother! Young Page that fell in love with her. I prefer the dragon! I'll stay with him!

The crowd were buzzing, the Herald and the escort remained in turmoil, and the Sister of Page waved to the people down and took refuge in the Dragon's arms who could not restrain happy laughing.

По мотивам сказки Мишеля Осело, «Колдунья».