

A Breakfast of Champions

By Michele Dutcher

“I doubt it, Dezmond.” I looked down at the human's face, shaking my head in disagreement as we hiked along the moonlit trail.

“I can hear the cynicism in your voice, my huge, fiery friend, but my statistical memory is impeccable. If you take a person 20 miles away from their place of birth, and tell them to point towards home, 78% of humans will point in the correct direction.”

I flexed my wings twice before giving in a little. “I guess it's possible for humans to do something useful. However, that means your kind would head in the wrong direction 12% of time.”

Dezmond snickered, slightly. “You seem to distrust me so much, Simon. Have I ever lied to you?”

I looked at him, almost shooting fire from the audacity of this statement. “Of course you have. I know you can't help it, being a lawyer and all.”

“Please! I prefer to think of myself as a man of letters: a person of leisure who has fallen on difficult times and been forced into a bourgeois life using my mastery of languages, common and foreign.”

There was silence between us for a moment as Dezmond looked around. “I think our journey has us quickly approaching a town. Perhaps, in case we meet others, you should do your magic and downsize your reptilian presence into a less horrendous form.”

“You mean make myself small...”

“Exactly, yes.”

And so I did exactly that, shrinking from a dragon ten feet tall at the shoulders, down to a loveable dragon the size of a small poodle – which are good eating by the way. Tasty. Yum.

Dezmond picked me up, and placed me on his shoulder. “I know it exhausts you to shrink, so let's rest.”

We sat in the moonlight, upon one of the five hills overlooking the village below. We watched as one oil-lamp after another was put out, leaving just a gray silhouette of the town below us.

It was so quiet, in fact, that Dezmond took out his earplugs. He took a deep breath, as though to begin a sentence, and then stopped cold.

“What is it?”

“Shush.”

I floated upwards a little.

“Can you stop all that fluttering about?”

I grabbed my wingtips and landed on the soft ground with a thump.

“Ouch! You know how sensitive my ears are!”

“Sorry boss.” I sat quietly, trying not to breathe.

“I hear money,” he whispered finally. “Someone is digging a hole – two someones in fact, named Ken and Louie.”

“And..”

“Who digs a hole after midnight when everyone else is sleeping?”

“True, boss, true!”

He reached into his pouch and threw me some fresh meat. “Let's get a room in this village.”

Dezmond was already awake when I opened my eyes.

“I found them,” he told me.

“Already?” I rooted around in a nest of sheets I had made on top of the bureau. “Is it daylight yet?”

“Not yet. You know how muddy sounds become when a village wakes up – better to give a good listen before that happens.” He was leaning out a window overlooking the street. “Louie and Ken are in the pokey. I heard them whispering to each other in Erithian. They robbed a pawn shop yesterday and got \$7000 of the Mob's money.”

“Where is it, boss? Where did they bury it?”

“They weren't talking about the location – not even to each other.”

“That's bad boss. We can't get close to them while they're in jail.”

Dezmond looked down the street, putting one figure to his lips. “I think opportunity is presenting itself. Four men are talking five blocks away. They are going to pay the foreigners a little visit and get their money back. They need an interpreter. And now they're saying something that they were once the #1 Snooker team in the county. I will go to the sheriff, introduce myself, and by nightfall the money will be ours.”

The office section of the jail was small, especially for a sheriff, four mobsters, two prisoners, Dezmond and myself – so the sheriff accepted a bribe and left. The mob boss pulled out a gun. “Tell them I will let them live if they tell me where the money is.”

Dezmond nodded and began speaking in Eritian. “Ken, he says tell him where the money is or he'll kill you. Louie, in two minutes I'll make a deal with you.”

Louie puffed up. “I will never betray my partner.”

“And I will never tell you where I hid the money,” said Ken.

“They say they will never tell you where the money is.”

The angry man put the gun's barrel beside Ken's temple and drew back the hammer. The foreigner began to speak hurriedly. “We buried the money below the oak tree, behind the barbershop!”

Dezmond turned to the Mob boss and said coolly, “He says he'll never tell you where the money is, and you don't have the stones to pull the trigger.”

The boss blew the man's head off. Dezmond looked at the little guy in back. “Are we partners now?” he asked in Eritian. Louie furiously nodded yes.

Dezmond turned to me and said 'now'. Finally! I could feel my body growing as I began to spit fire at the four gangsters. A second ball of fire blew out a wall of the jail.

Dezmond and Louie ran out through the smoldering hole, eager to grab shovels and get out of town with the \$7000. But I decided to stick around for a bit – how could I pass up a breakfast of champions? Tasty. Yum.

The End