

The Confused Knight

A Dark Seam Story

In the days of lore in the kingdom of medieval England, the lord of Coventry was distraught. His daughter was to wed in six days, and the previous day a villager spotted a menacing dragon in the forest.

“You look rather pale, milord,” said the lord’s advisor. “Perhaps a rest would be in order.”

“How can I rest when there’s a dragon in the forest?” the lord asked. “Lords from all over are coming to this event. This dragon cannot interfere!” The lord stood from his chair. “Bring to me the greatest knight we have.”

“Right away, milord,” the lord’s advisor replied, and he left the room.

The lord sat back down and began to worry more. A brief moment later, his daughter entered the room. He stood back up. “How are you today, my daughter?” he asked.

“I have heard rumors that there is a dragon in the forest,” she replied. “Is it true?”

“Yes, ‘tis misfortune, it is,” the lord replied. “But, I have our best knight working on it.”

“Oh, no,” the lord’s daughter replied. “Surely you’re not sending Sir Chester!”

“Who is Sir Chester?” the lord asked.

“He is our best knight,” the lord’s daughter replied. “Who else would he be?”

Just then, the lord’s advisor entered the room. “Milord, I have brought Sir Lucas. He says he shall..”

“Nonsense!” the lord shouted. “Bring me Sir Chester!”

The lord’s advisor coughed nervously. “Sir Chester?” he asked. “Are you sure? He is rather...”

“He is our best knight,” the lord replied.

“I do not think...”

“Advisor, I am your lord, and you must do as I say, and I say I want Sir Chester for this quest,” the lord growled angrily. “Now go!”

“Yes, milord,” the advisor replied as he backed out of the room.

Sir Lucas still stood in the room. After a moment of comfortable awkwardness, he spoke. “What do you wish of me, milord?” he asked.

“Oh, I don’t know,” the lord replied. “Go do something useful and out of the way.”

“What would you suggest I do?” Sir Lucas asked.

“I don’t know. Go clean the moat out. It reeks of filth.”

Sir Lucas’s eyes widened, and he stood there in shock.

“Well, you heard my father,” the lord’s daughter said. “Get to it!”

“Yes, milady,” Sir Lucas said, and he left. “Clean out the moat?” he said to himself as he left.

The lord sat back down in his chair. “Don’t worry,” his daughter said. “Everything will go as we planned. It will be a truly wonderful day.”

“I hope you’re right,” the lord replied. “If anything...”

“Milord, I present Sir Chester,” the lord’s adviser said as he entered the room.

The lord stood from his chair once again. “So,” he said sternly, “You’re our best knight, I’m told.”

“I-I only l-live to s-serve, mi-milord,” Sir Chester replied, trying desperately not to appear as nervous as he was.

“As you well know, my daughter here is getting married in six days,” the lord said.

“Y-yes, milord,” Sir Chester replied. He looked at the lord’s daughter. She winked at him.

“Well, it seems there’s a dragon in these woods, and we need a strong knight like yourself to take care of it.”

“Consider it taken care of, milord,” Sir Chester replied with a sudden boost of confidence. He then turned and began to head out the door when he tripped over himself and came crashing to the floor. “I-I’m sorry, mi-milord,” he said as he struggled back to his feet. He then charged out the door.

“If that’s our best knight,” the lord said, “we’re in trouble.”

Having no clue where to look for the dragon, Sir Chester gallantly charged into the forest in a direction he chose carefully and randomly. The sun began its descent on the horizon and the sky slowly darkened, yet still he charged on. After a few hours, it got so dark that he tripped over a stick in the ground and fell face first into a small pool of mud. On the wind of the forest Sir Chester could hear laughter from afar.

The next day, Sir Chester awoke with a crust of dry mud on his face and armor. He jumped up and looked around, disoriented from the preceding events. After a few minutes of wondering where he was, he remembered his mission, and charged off deeper into the woods.

After a few hours, Sir Chester came upon a large cave. The cave entrance was above ground, rocky and cold, but the cave descended beneath the earth. “A knight fears nothing,” Sir Chester repeated to himself. He then closed his eyes and stepped inside. Once inside, he opened his eyes to discover he couldn’t see anything. He took a torch from his pack and lit it.

The cave was musty and humid. Sir Chester could hear a faint breathing echoing through the darkness. He pressed forward, his torch shaking in his hand. After a few minutes, the cave opened up into a large room, and in the center was the very dragon Sir Chester was sent to kill. He drew his sword.

“And what are you going to do with that, then?” the dragon asked.

Sir Chester jumped when the dragon spoke. “You can speak?” he asked.

“Please do not answer my questions with unrelated questions,” the dragon said.

Sir Chester looked at his sword. “Well, I-I’ve been sent to k-kill you.”

“Kill me?” the dragon asked. “Why would you want to do a thing like that? What have I done to you?”

“Well, n-nothing,” Sir Chester replied. “But my lord sent me to kill you so I must kill you now.” With that, Sir Chester charged forward, sword flailing in the air. When

he got near the dragon, he tripped over a small rock and plunged into the ground. The sword slid across the room.

“That’s not a very good method of killing me,” the dragon said.

Sir Chester scrambled to his feet and looked around for his sword. The dragon whipped his tail out, grabbed the sword, and slid it to him.

“Could I have that back?” Sir Chester asked.

“Not until you tell me why your lord wants me killed,” the dragon replied.

Sir Chester’s face went blank. “Be-because there’s a wedding for his daughter.”

“That’s no reason to kill a dragon,” the dragon said. “What’s the wedding got to do with me?”

“I... I don’t know,” Sir Chester replied. “Could I have the sword back now?”

“Go back to your lord and find out why he wants to kill me,” the dragon replied. “When you come back with the answer, then I’ll give you your sword.”

Sir Chester was not sure what to think of this deal, but he knew he could not slay the dragon without his sword, so without a further word he headed back to the castle.

Sir Chester arrived at the castle just before nightfall. As he approached the gate, the guards on the castle wall shouted “He’s back! Sir Chester killed the dragon!” The drawbridge came down and Sir Chester entered the court.

“Was it fierce?”

“Was it huge?”

“Did it breathe fire?”

Sir Chester just looked at the people with a blank stare. He then proceeded to the lord’s chamber.

“Did all go well?” the lord asked.

“Well, not really, milord.”

“No?” the lord asked. “Why not?”

“The dragon took my sword,” Sir Chester replied. “He says I can’t have it back until he tells me why you want me to kill him.”

“Well, that’s obvious,” said the lord. “The dragon will ruin the wedding if he’s not slain.”

“Oh.”

“I want you to leave first thing tomorrow morning and go back to that cave... and kill that dragon this time.”

“Y-yes, mi-milord,” Sir Chester replied, and exited the room.

The next day, Sir Chester charged into the woods once again. It was nightfall before he found the cave again. He once again lit a torch and entered.

“Ah! You’ve returned,” the dragon said.

“Yes, and I’ve brought the answer to your question,” Sir Chester said with confidence. “My lord said you would ruin the wedding if you were not slain.”

“How true,” the dragon said. “Well, I see you did not get a new sword when you went to your castle, so I shall return to you the one you brought yesterday.” The dragon then slid the sword across the floor over to Sir Chester.

“Thank you,” Sir Chester said. “Now I shall kill you.” With that, Sir Chester once again charged at the dragon, and once again tripped over a small rock, landing face-first on the rough floor.

“With such form, how do you ever expect to kill me?” the dragon asked.

“I... I... I was going to stab you through the neck,” Sir Chester replied.

“Surely you were not expecting me to let you do it,” the dragon said.

“B-but you gave me my sword.”

“That doesn’t mean I’m not going to put up a fight,” said the dragon. “Look, if you get close enough to me to stab me I would kill you in an instant. However, if you had a ranged weapon...”

“A ranged weapon?” Sir Chester asked, looking rather puzzled.

“Like a bow or a sling,” the dragon replied. “With a weapon like that you wouldn’t have to get close to me, and I could never attack you.”

“Oh,” Sir Chester replied. “That’s a good idea.”

“I do not have a bow here, but I suppose you could get one from your castle.”

“Yes,” Sir Chester said. “I’ll travel back there tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” the dragon asked. “Well what are you going to do tonight?”

“I thought I would just sleep,” Sir Chester replied. “Do you mind if I sleep here?”

“Not at all,” the dragon replied. “You’re only trying to kill me, after all.”

“I promise I won’t kill you tonight,” Sir Chester said.

“How do you know I won’t kill you while you sleep?” the dragon asked. “After all, I am going to ruin the wedding if I am not slain.”

“Well, promise you won’t kill me, then,” Sir Chester replied.

“All right, I promise not to kill you tonight,” the dragon said.

“Well, good,” Sir Chester said. With that he set up his things and went to sleep.

The next morning, Sir Chester awoke to find the dragon still sleeping. He quietly left the cave and headed back to the castle to get a bow like the dragon suggested.

He arrived at the castle at nightfall. The guard atop the castle wall shouted “He’s back! Lower the drawbridge!” The drawbridge came down and Sir Chester entered the court once again.

“Did you kill the dragon this time?”

“Was it an epic battle?”

“Did you chop off its head?”

Sir Chester gave the people a bewildered look. “You people are strange,” he said, and moved on.

“Did you kill the dragon this time?” the lord asked.

“Well, no,” Sir Chester answered with a feeling of *deja vu*.

“What happened this time? Did he take your arms?”

Sir Chester looked down at his arms. “N-no, milord, he d-didn’t.”

“Well what *is* the problem, then?” the lord asked.

“I n-need to use a b-bow,” Sir Chester said. “Th-that way he can’t k-kill me.”

“Good thinking!” the lord replied with great enthusiasm. “We’ll give you the greatest bow of all our armory! You can head out tomorrow morning.”

“Th-thank you, mi-milord,” Sir Chester said with a sigh of relief.

That night, Sir Chester was awoken by the loud creaking sound the door to his room made when it opened. “Wh-who’s there?” he asked, his voice shaking.

A torch flared up and the room filled with light. There in the middle of his room, holding the torch, was the lord’s daughter. “I just came by to watch you,” she said.

“Watch me what?” Sir Chester asked.

“Watch you sleeping,” she replied. She walked over to his bed and sat on the side. She put the torch in an empty vase next to the bed.

“Well, I’m awake now, so…”

She threw herself upon him. “Oh, Sir Chester,” she cried. Her face burrowed into his chest and he felt her tears wet his shirt.

“Wh-what’s the matter?” he asked nervously.

“I can’t bear to think of you fighting that awful dragon,” she said through her tears. “He’ll tear you to shreds!”

“N-no,” Sir Chester said. “I’m t-taking a bow, and he w-won’t even g-get close.”

She looked up at him. “Really?” she said, sniffing a bit.

“Yes, mi-milady,” he replied.

She wrapped her arms around his neck. “Thank you,” she said. “I’ll be forever in your debt.” She then kissed him with a passion he had never known before, which doesn’t say much. As she left, she stopped at the door, looked back at him, and winked. She then disappeared into the dark. Sir Chester lay awake in bed for several hours after that, overwhelmed by what had just occurred.

The next morning, Sir Chester headed out to the cave once again. As he walked, he thought only about the night before. Although he felt wonderful about what his lord’s daughter did, he could only think about how she was getting married in just two days. The way she acted, he felt that she might be in love with him, and not the man she was going to marry. Until nightfall, these were the only thoughts that occupied his mind. Once it got dark, however, he realized that he must get to the cave while he could still see.

Sir Chester arrived at the cave just as a cloud passed between him and the moon. Now the only light was that of his torch. He walked confidently into the cave. Having spent the night there made him more comfortable with the thought of returning to it.

“I brought the bow,” Sir Chester exclaimed when he saw the dragon.

The dragon shook its head. “You’re not supposed to announce that you have it,” he said. “You’re just supposed to shoot me with it.”

“Oh, right,” Sir Chester said. He then took up the bow. After a few moments, he put the bow down and looked around with a dumbfounded look.

“You’re supposed to shoot arrows from it,” the dragon said with a sigh.

“Arrows?” Sir Chester asked.

“You *did* bring arrows, didn’t you?” the dragon asked.

“I-I f-forgot,” Sir Chester replied nervously.

“The bow is absolutely useless with arrows.”

Sir Chester looked around himself. He then drew his sword and tried to use it as an arrow. When he released the string, the sword flew ten feet across the room then bounced on the floor.

“Forever determined, thou art,” the dragon said. “Look, just go back the castle, get some arrows, then hurry back.”

“Shall we have the same agreement we had before?” Sir Chester asked.

“No,” the dragon replied. “You must leave tonight. I don’t care how dark it is outside. If you stay here I’ll kill you.” A look of fear suddenly took Sir Chester’s face. “What are you waiting for? GO!”

Sir Chester ran out of the cave. Once outside, he tripped over the first rock he met. He scrambled to his feet and ran in the direction he thought to be the castle.

The next day, the people wondered what had become of Sir Chester. As the day pressed on, they only worried more. “He never got back until nightfall before, so we shouldn’t worry ‘till then,” the lord’s advisor told the people. “I am certain he will be fine.” The people, however, felt differently. Something in the air suggested he would not return this night. And sure enough, he did not.

Well into the night, the lord paced back and forth in his chamber. “Father,” his daughter said, “You must get some sleep tonight. We need to prepare for the wedding all day tomorrow.”

“How can I sleep without knowing what has happened to Sir Chester?” he asked. “If he doesn’t return, I’ll not know if the dragon is slain or not. That dragon could ruin everything.” He paced the room a few more times. “That’s it, then. Tomorrow, I’ll send three of our finest knights out to find and kill the dragon, then find out what happened to Sir Chester.”

“Father, I am certain Sir Chester is fine,” his daughter said. “He probably was just tired after slaying the beast and is resting in its lair.”

“Do you think so?” the lord asked.

“I know so,” his daughter replied. “He is a skilled man beneath his clumsy shell. He is the bravest of the brave and the strongest of the strong. There is nothing he could not overcome.”

“Well, I guess you would know our knights better than I,” the lord said. “You did spend so much time with them while I was tending to matters of rule.” His daughter blushed when he said this, but he was oblivious and failed to notice. “I guess I shouldn’t worry,” he said with a smile.

“Now will you get some rest?” his daughter asked.

“I believe I shall,” the lord replied. He then hugged his daughter and went to bed as she left.

The next morning, the lord was pacing in his chamber once again.

“Now what is the matter?” the lord’s advisor inquired.

“Sir Chester has still not returned,” the lord said. “I thought for certain he would be back by now.”

“Surely you would not expect him to travel at night, milord,” the lord’s advisor said. “A torch can only provide enough light to see what’s next to you, and navigation would be difficult for even the the most skilled of trackers. I saw no moon in the sky last night to light the way.”

“You think he will be back tonight?” the lord asked.

“I’m sure of it!”

“Very well,” the lord said with a new confidence. “Let us prepare for tomorrow’s event.

The day grew long as the preparations for the wedding ensued. The wedding was to take place outside of the castle in a flat clearing. A long, red carpet was rolled down the aisle, and an altar was erected at the end. There were flowers everywhere, and as the sky cleared and the breeze calmed it seemed it would be a perfect day.

“I hope tomorrow is this beautiful,” the lord’s daughter said to the lord’s advisor.

“There’s not a cloud in the sky,” said the lord’s advisor. “I cannot imagine it would be any other way tomorrow. It will be a wonderful ceremony.”

Just then, the first guests, Lord Humphrey and his lady, arrived in a carriage pulled by eight white horses. The lord awaited them in the court.

“Lord Humphrey!” the lord exclaimed. “I am honored that you could be here for my daughter’s wedding.”

“Of course I am here,” Lord Humphrey replied. “I wouldn’t miss her wedding for the world!” As the two laughed, the lord’s daughter approached them.

“And here’s the bride herself,” said the lord. “Come, say hello to Lord Humphrey.”

“Hello,” she said.

“I have heard that you are having trouble with rogues in the forest,” Lord Humphrey whispered to his cousin.

“Well, not exactly,” the lord replied.

“Now, now, there’s no shame in admitting there’s a few rogues about, but I came prepared just in case.” Lord Humphrey then turned around to face his carriage. “Sir Giles, come forth!”

Suddenly, a large, armor-clad man stepped out from the carriage. His sword was so large that he wore his sheath on his back. He walked over to the two lords and kneeled down. “I am at your service, milord,” he said with great confidence.

“Rise,” Lord Humphrey said. Sir Giles stood up. He was seven feet tall, and towered over the others. “This is my personal guard,” Lord Humphrey said. “If there is a problem with any rogues, he will take care of it without hesitation.”

“Although I do feel safer in the presence of this giant, my knights are very capable of handling any rogues that may be about,” the lord said. “However...” The lord took his cousin by the arm and the two walked away from the rest. “Our problem,” he whispered, “is not rogues. It is a dragon.”

“A dragon?” Lord Humphrey asked. “In these parts? I have never heard of dragons here before.”

“Nor have I,” the lord replied. “However, our very own Sir Chester came face to face with this beast.”

“Did he slay the beast, then?” Lord Humphrey asked.

“We do not know, for he has not returned.”

“If he has not returned, how do you know he met the dragon?”

“He told us of it.”

Lord Humphrey looked puzzled. “You say he told you of it, yet he has not returned from his quest.”

“You see,” the lord began, “the first time he ventured out, the dragon stole his sword, so he returned, and headed out again.”

“Ah, with a new sword.”

“No, he just went back and got the one he used before.”

“How did he get it back from the dragon, then?” Lord Humphrey asked.

“The dragon gave it back,” the lord replied.

“And he did not slay the dragon this time either?”

“No, he did not. Listen, it’s a long story I am sure I can tell you at dinner. Let me show you around.”

“Sir Giles!” Lord Humphrey called.

“Yes, milord,” Sir Giles said as he approached the two.

Lord Humphrey turned back to his cousin. “Sir Giles has slain a few dragons in his life. I am sure that this one would not be a problem for him.”

“As confident as I am in my knights, I would feel better knowing what has become of our knight Sir Chester.”

“Then it is agreed,” proclaimed Lord Henry. “Sir Giles will head out immediately.”

“Very well, milord,” Sir Giles said. He then walked out of the castle to begin his adventure.

“He is a brave one,” the lord said.

“Yes,” Lord Humphrey replied. “He is that and more.”

As Sir Giles approached the edge of the forest, he was intercepted by the lord’s daughter. “Good afternoon, milady,” Sir Giles said.

“Hello,” the lord’s daughter said with seductive smile. “Where are you going?”

“My lord has commanded me to slay a dragon that lives in these woods,” Sir Giles replied.

“Do we not already have a knight doing that task?” she asked.

“I am merely going to make sure that the dragon is indeed slain,” Sir Giles replied.

“Such a brave man you are,” she said. She walked around him, eyeing his armor-clad body. “I feel so safe when I’m near you.” She then threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

“Milady,” Sir Giles said, pulling away. “Are you not to be wed tomorrow?”

“Yes,” she replied. “Tomorrow.” She kissed him again, then led him into the woods.

“Who’s there?” the dragon asked at the sound of heavy footsteps.

“I am Sir Giles,” the knight proclaimed as he drew his sword. “What have you done with Sir Chester?”

“Who is Sir Chester?” the dragon asked.

“He is the knight sent before me to slay you.”

“Oh, him. He ran away. I am afraid I gave him quite a scare.”

“Then I shall complete the quest in his place,” said the gallant knight. “Prepare to die.”

“Oh, come now. You don’t honestly think you can kill me,” the dragon remarked. “You’re not even standing up straight.”

Sir Giles looked himself over and noticed the dragon was right. He then corrected his posture. "Now, you will die." With that, Sir Giles charged at the dragon. Unfortunately, his grip suddenly weakened when he swung. The sword flew over the dragon and bounced off a stalactite hanging from the ceiling. Once seeing the knight's moment of weakness, the dragon struck, and with one blow from its tail, killed Sir Giles.

The next morning, all the other guests arrived at the castle. Some came on horseback; some came in carriages pulled by twelve horses. With each carriage was at least one personal guard on horseback.

White flowers were everywhere. The lord had apparently gone to great lengths to ensure that this event was spectacular. Tents had been set up for the bride, groom, and servants where they were prepared. People began taking their seats as the servants took their positions. The ceremony was about to begin.

Music took the air and the crowd began to silence. Guards lifted their pikes as the groom left his tent and walked toward the center aisle where he awaited his bride. Several moments passed, and no appearance of the lord's daughter was made.

"She's gone!" a servant cried as she came from the bride's tent. "She was here, and now she's gone!"

The crowd began to speak amongst itself. The groom's face changed from one of pride to one of horror and humiliation.

"Where is she?" the lord asked the servant.

"I don't know," the servant replied. "She asked me to step out while she changed into her gown, and when I returned, she was gone."

Just then, a loud roar echoed from the forest. The crowd silenced. A moment passed and everyone felt a vibration through the ground. Then, they heard the thumping. Servants began to flee the scene, while guests were asking about what was going on. The personal guards lords had brought with them drew their swords and put themselves between the forest and the guests.

Suddenly, the dragon leaped out from the forest, a torrent of flames pouring from its mouth as it flew forward. The dragon was not as big as was expected by the vibrations they had felt, but they fled nonetheless. The dragon, however, was too fast for any of them, and torched them as they ran. The tents quickly caught fire, and soon after the flowers were burning as well. The horses broke their bonds and ran into the woods. The dragon ignored them and continued to bring the human guests to ash.

Bodies burned as the dragon turned his attention to the castle. No one was left to kill. Only the castle remained standing.

Suddenly, the dragon began changing shape. His forearms slid to the sides and his claws retracted. His legs became slender and jointed the opposite direction they were before. His neck shrunk and his head became spherical. His tail disappeared and his scales withdrew, revealing skin beneath. Soon, he appeared as human as those he had just slaughtered. He waved his hand and a cloak appeared on his body.

"They are spectacular flames," the lord's daughter said. The former dragon waved his hand once more and suddenly she was visible.

"It will make a fine kingdom," the former dragon said.

"What ever became of Sir Chester?" she asked.

“He ran off into the night. I have not heard from him since. Now, what did you do to that other knight that made him so clumsy when he showed at my cave?”

“I... I slipped him something,” she replied nervously. “Yes, I gave him something as he was approaching the forest.”

“Well, whatever it was, it worked wonders,” the former dragon said. “He couldn’t even hold on to his sword when he swung it.”

“We can discuss all this later,” the lord’s daughter said. “For now, let’s talk about how we’re going to take the king’s throne.”

“Very well,” the former dragon replied. “Come, milady, our castle awaits.” He took her hand and they walked amongst the pyres to the castle before them.