

The Bell, the Rose, and the Dragon

by Fairfield

This is another fine adventure you got me into.

Chapter 1 of 1

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In the land where bluebells grow
Treasure's guarded by a flame.
Gold and jewels all in a row
Await the hero of great fame.
Across the wide green carpet
Where the danger always grows.
Comes one all dressed in velvet,
Silver bells are on his toes.
He has no fear for his life.
He can strike a mighty pose.
He's made his pledge to his wife
To bring her a silver rose.

"Okay," said Draco, looking up from the manuscript, "you found a nursery rhyme on an old parchment."

"Don't you see what it means?" asked Luna.

"Mothers and babies haven't changed much over the last thousand years?" tried Draco.

"No, ninny," said Parvati. "It means the nursery rhyme came from an old treasure map."

"Oh, of course, it's obvious now that you point it out," said Draco.

"It's not that obvious," said Lavender. "It took us a while to figure it out, and nobody else has."

"I was being sarcastic," said Draco.

"Is he allowed to do that?" asked Parvati.

"Think it through, Draco," said Luna. "The poem was once important, but its meaning has been lost. Where do you think nursery rhymes come from?"

Draco thought for a bit. "The same place babies come from?"

More thoughts gathered in his mind. "But why are you showing this to me instead of just grabbing all the treasure for yourselves?"

"Didn't you read the part about the flames and the danger?" asked Lavender. "We need someone to fight the dragon."

Draco did not evince the eagerness that the girls had hoped for.

"Harry fought a dragon," said Parvati.

Fleur fought a dragon," said Lavender, "and she's a girl."

"But that was for a championship," said Luna, "and they didn't know they were going to do that when they entered the contest."

The other two girls glared at Luna. They had known it was a risk bringing her along, but they were going to meet a dragon and heaven knows what other strange beasts. But the two were old campaigners, and they had a backup plan in case the voice of reason fell on deaf ears. They gave Draco a packet of photos.

"We told Pansy she was a semifinalist in a modeling contest and the final decision would be based on how well she could display lingerie," said Lavender. "If you don't agree to go with us and fight the dragon, we'll tell Astoria that we found these in your cloak."

Draco sifted through the pictures. Yes, that was Pansy as he remembered her. He was actually relieved. He was afraid they had some with his hand down her blouse from last week. He had thought he had heard some rustling in the bushes.

The girls thought he was looking at the poses with more fondness than fear. "We'll show them to your mother," they said.

"Show them to my father first. He still likes to help mum choose her intimate garments. Besides, I think he can appreciate their intrinsic value. Some of these are quite artistic," said Draco, picking out the skimpiest costumes.

"Do you really think so?" asked Lavender. "We took them ourselves."

"It was a lot of work getting the lighting and everything just right," said Parvati. "We threw out a lot, and we're only showing you the best."

Lavender and Parvati were rapt with attention as Draco made comments about poses and lighting and observed that the photos would have more impact if the model wore jewelry, especially if there were more jewelry than garment.

"I regret interrupting the Fashion Hour," said Luna, "but we need to plan our quest."

"But Draco doesn't want to fight a dragon," said Lavender and Parvati.

Luna had a moment of clarity. "If he comes with us, he can preside over the next photo session," she said. "It will be a runoff between Pansy Parkinson and Ginevra Weasley." She paused. "And if there's a silver rose in the treasure, he can have it for Astoria."

Thus it was that, one week later, under the cover of darkness, Draco was sneaking across a green velvet landscape guided by bluebell flames while a silver moon rose. He still wasn't certain that he had to dress in velvet with bells on his toes as the girls insisted.

Luna's plan was simplicity itself: Draco would sneak into the dragon's lair while the girls stood a safe distance away to warn him if anything untoward happened and to offer assistance if needed.

When he was in position to see the treasure, he decided it would be easier than he had feared. The guardian was a young dragon, very young, and it was napping. He reminded himself not to be greedy as he filched the smaller diamonds and rubies lying at the foot of the pile instead of the larger ones under the dragon. He was about to leave when he noticed an elegant rose made of silver – under the dragon's tail. He told himself to not risk losing everything, but he also imagined the jeers of the girls if he returned without it. He would take the risk. A quick flick of the wand, and he had it. Almost. The dragon woke with a bellow of anger.

Someone was stealing its toys.

The bellow shook the roof; it shook the walls; and it shook Draco. The bells on his toes rang, and the dragon was looking right at him. Draco tore out of the cave, bells ringing and screaming for help.

"Did you hear something?" asked Parvati.

"Only those cute little bells we sewed on his shoes, but we told him to be quiet," said Lavender.

Then they saw Draco racing down the hill with a dark shape following him.

"Don't run so fast. You'll lose our bells," yelled Parvati.

"It was a lot of work sewing them on," added Lavender.

They were right. One of the bells came off. But the dragon stopped to pick it up and shake it, entranced. Determined to help, the girls shot a net to capture the dragon, but it saw it coming, and fried it with a burst of flame. In the heat of battle, however, it dropped the bell and stepped on it, rendering it useless. The dragon decided to catch the figure who had more of those marvelous toys.

"Oh, no, all that work for nothing," said Lavender as another two bells fell off Draco's shoes.

In its enthusiasm, the dragon overshot the shiny objects, pivoted, and stepped on them again. This time, however, the bells rolled, the dragon lost its footing, and it tumbled down the hill into the river.

The four thieves were making their escape when Draco suddenly signaled a stop.

"Wait," he said.

The moon had risen, and it showed a baby dragon sitting by the river and weeping over its loss. Draco removed the last three bells from his shoes and levitated them to the disconsolate figure. They left him dancing and juggling the bells and cavorting with the best things anyone had ever brought him.

Later, Draco was unbearably smug.

"I was right," he said. "It was a nursery rhyme."

Prompt from MuseAmusant: bluebell flames, green velvet, a silver rose