

Winter Dragons

by madjh

Dragons lead Charlie away from his home, an improbable love leads him back.
(Charlie/OFC)

One Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: This story was written as a "Secret Santa" present for a fellow member of SPEW on the MNFF forums, Christmas of 2005.

The Prompt:

I'd like a story about a Muggle and a wizard/witch, and the choices they have to make in order to continue their relationship. They can be friends or lovers or even siblings (the wizard/witch can be a Muggle-born), and the characters can be from canon (though I'd prefer not to have the trio) or they can be OCs. I'd like some idea of the sacrifices they have to make on both sides, and what they both have to give up in order to keep this relationship going.

Charlie stood in the deserted wintry plain and allowed the cold wind to chap his face. There was no spell to cast that would make him more comfortable or his task more pleasant. There wasn't any help for it, someone had to watch the skies for the dragons, and today the task had fallen to him. Shapes materialised over the swell of the earth in front of him, but he kept his gaze towards the clear blue of the January sky.

"I know you're there," came her husky voice. "You can hide yourself from me, but you won't keep me from talking to you."

Charlie remained silent, but his attention was no longer focused upwards. Instead, his eyes rested on the woman before him. Her cheeks were flushed red from the harsh wind and the cold. Her hands were rough and worn, as she wore no gloves. She was clad in dirty jeans, and her bulky canvas coat surely covered several layers of old flannel. Her hair was pulled back into a messy braid, and her head was covered with a woollen hat. Her leather boots were scarred by years of hard work. Angie was by no means a soft woman, but Charlie still had to suppress the urge to pull her close.

"This is beyond foolish, Charlie. I know what you are. I know what you can do. I know you. Why do you insist on shutting me out?"

"Good thing Aubrey is in the western pasture today. He doesn't like it when you talk to yourself." Bringing up her staunch older brother wasn't a fair tactic, but it was an effective one. Angie was very connected to her family and to the ways of her people. It never ceased to amaze Charlie how stubbornly the small Wyoming community stuck to their mores and shunned all outsiders.

Angie heaved an exhausted sigh. "I'm not crazy, Charlie, anymore than you are. You're a magician; I can live with that."

A magician. Such an odd word, and one he'd never associated with himself. But, wizards were fanciful things, and Angie's world was a hard one that was only survived with cold practicality.

Charlie Disillusioned himself. "Can you? Do you really want to be associated with me? I'll never fit in your society. I'll always be that crazy Brit who wanders the pastures and says strange things."

Angie blinked. "It's so odd when you do that. You just sort of melt into view."

"Precisely. I'm odd. The people around here would just as soon see me dead as never see me again. If you were ever associated with me, you would be shunned too."

"My family loves me. They'll still love me, even if they never quite understand you."

Charlie shook his head. "Am I supposed to live like that forever? A barely tolerated outcast? Did it never occur to you that I might have a family too?"

"You have family? In England? Why did you leave?" she stammered.

Charlie tilted his head back to the heavens and struggled to find the words. "My parents are both still alive and four of my five brothers, and I have a little sister. And yes, they're all still in England."

"Why did you leave?" she repeated.

Charlie winced. Angie always saw the heart of the matter. She was intuitive in a way that had nothing to do with Divination, but was far more accurate. "I couldn't face them."

"You ran awfully far away."

"I did," he admitted. Charlie looked down to see Angie wrapping her arms around him.

"You'll have to go back," she murmured against his heavy coat.

Charlie groaned and gave into the comfort of her arms. He nestled his face into her neck and murmured, "Yeah, someday I will."

"I I could go with you," she whispered.

Charlie curled his forefinger under her chin and tilted her face up to his. "Your place is here, Angie, on the land, with the cattle, close to your family."

Angie shrugged. "I would still go. I know that I'd be out of place and I'm not magical, but I would go with you."

"I believe you would," he whispered. "I'd be honoured, Angie, to have you meet my family. I think I could even handle being the outsider in yours."

"You wouldn't be an outsider to me. Isn't that what really matters?"

Charlie nodded.

"This is going to work, Charlie. I promise."

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Charlie sat on the settee with his long denim clad legs propped up on the table, in front of a roaring fire. His legs were crossed at the ankles and his feet were bare. His soft flannel shirt was untucked and rolled up at the cuffs. His mother handed him a steaming mug of coffee while shaking her head at his very American pose. Charlie caught the teasing gleam in her eyes and smiled back. He'd taken to wearing Muggle clothes all of the time now to help Angie feel less self-aware, though he wondered if he needed to have bothered. Arthur Weasley had been absolutely delighted by his Muggle daughter-in-law, and they sat and talked for hours about everything under the sun.

Harry and Hermione, having been brought up as Muggles, had instantly latched onto Angie and had made her feel more at ease. Ron had married Hermione while Charlie had been gone and had also done his level best to be thoughtful, though he was still learning the Muggle ways of his in-laws. All in all, though Angie missed the wide open spaces of her homeland, she'd been completely absorbed into the Weasley family. Her lack of magic skills hadn't been an obstacle, though occasionally it was a source of laughter as she went about simple tasks in a mundane manner to the bemusement of the wizards around her.

"I like your family," murmured Angie as she wormed her way onto the settee next to him. Charlie smiled down at his new wife and shifted to accommodate her.

"You were scared when we boarded the plane."

Angie shrugged her shoulders. "I'd promised. I knew I'd be scared, but I wasn't about to back down on my promise. Not after everything you've put up with."

It was Charlie's turn to shrug. "It wasn't so bad, Angie. Telling your father the truth helped a lot."

Charlie turned his head and leaned into her soft hair. He smirked at the slight scent of apple. It always struck him as a strange scent for hair. "He'll help your brothers come around."

"He wants to see the dragons," she whispered.

"So, when we get back, we'll have to show him."

"Even though you're protected by magic, it scares me that you work with them."

"Even though you've done it your whole life, it scares me that you ride with the cattle unprotected by magic," he replied.

"You know, Charlie, you're not the only one with a wife around here. Some of the rest of us would like the chance to cuddle on the settee in front of the fire," said a very disgruntled Harry.

Angie gasped, startled by the intrusion. Charlie cocked an eyebrow at his brother-in-law. "Like any of us actually want to see you cuddling Ginny. We let you marry her with the understanding that you wouldn't actually be touching her."

Angie giggled and pinched her husband. "I think my brothers gave you the same rule, but look how well you've obeyed!"

"That's different," grouched Charlie.

"Well, I guess we'd better not tell our brothers about the babies," said Ginny as she transfigured the arm chair into another settee and plopped down.

"I guess not," echoed Angie, and she shared a secret grin with Ginny.

Charlie tightened his hold on Angie, but showed no other outward surprise. "Well done, mate!" he congratulated Harry. Harry's sloppy grin was enough to appease the brother in Charlie. His sister, and his soon to be nephew or niece, were in capable and loving hands.

He hadn't been surprised to hear Ginny's news, she'd been acting a bit off. What had caught him off guard was the phrase she'd used and Angie's comment afterwards. "Angie?" he whispered, his voice trembling with fear and excitement.

Angie beamed up at him. "Yes, Charlie," she said.

Charlie looked up to see his parents entering the room. "I'm going to be a father," he murmured in amazement.

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Arthur looked at the two terrified young men before him. They clung desperately to their wives, searching for strength from their partners. Arthur smiled broadly. He remembered those days well, awaiting the birth of his first child. He'd never forget the fear, or the love, and he felt his heart swell with joy that Harry and Charlie had been given the chance at love. His second eldest son had had a lot in common with Harry. They'd both struggled with the guilt of things that had been beyond their control, and both had had to learn to trust again.

"Angie, my dear," he said, "congratulations. I'm so very happy for the both of you and so glad to have you as a part of my family."

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