



The Maiden and the Dragon

John Henry Carrozza

THE MAIDEN AND THE DRAGON

Sweetly in Winter, the North Wind blows,
And softly the river sings;
A Maiden, her eyes to the distant stars,
Dreams of impossible things.

She pictures a mountain, its peak above clouds,
It's base in a meadow of rye;
But where its middle should be, instead
There is only an infinite sky.

She dreams of a house in a country wood,
Scarcely a hut from without;
Yet inside is found a castle of splendor,
Its rooms of a hundred count.

The Maiden, she dreams as she sits on a stone,
By the side of a riverbed;
When all of a sudden a shadow appeared,
from somewhere up over her head.

A Dragon, soaring from out of the East,
Swirled its tail in the air;
It landed across from the Maiden and sat,
Wielding a wicked stare.

"Tell me, Fair Lady, of what do you dream?
Tell me your fondest desires,
And I will grant all of your wishes, Sweet Child,
As surely as Mount Aerie's spires.

And all, Fair Maiden, I ask in return
Is the simplest of any command;
Climb on my back and journey with me
To a faraway magical land."

The Maiden, she thought for a moment, and then
She asked with a surly pride:
"And what if you cannot perform as you say?"
"Impossible," the Dragon replied.

"But what if you can't?" She asked him again,
"What if my dreams are too big?"
"If that be the case, my ludicrous lass,
Then I'll come with you to your dig."

At that, the Maiden nodded consent,
And the Dragon returned the favor;
And then the Maiden began her wish,
A moment she always will savor.

She spoke of a house, bigger inside than out,
And of a mountain that has no middle;
She told him of fires that burned underwater,
And asked him a simple riddle:

"What can be true, yet still be wrong,
Young, yet still be old,
Close, yet very far away,
Named, yet never told?"

The Dragon thought for a moment and then
Said to the Maiden with pride,
"These are all things which are simple indeed,"
And he stretched his wings out wide.

"Look to the distance, and you shall see
A mountain ten mountains tall,
It's base on the ground, it's peak in the clouds,
Yet nary a middle at all.

And look to the river, below the foam,
And witness the fire that glows;

Brighter than even the brightest stars,
Hotter than Hades' coals.

And there in that wood, you will find, I trust
A house as small as a tent;
Go to it now and venture inside,
And you'll find that your wish is spent."

The Maiden, she was impressed by the show
Of all of the things she had dreamt,
Yet there still was one thing he had not done,
And of this he was not exempt.

"What of my riddle?" The Maiden asked,
"You have not answered it yet."
The Dragon he nodded and quietly said
As soft as Dragon can get:

"Nothing, M'lady can be as you say,
True and still be wrong;
If something is young, it is not old,
For all of eternity long.

Anything close is here and not there,
And so cannot be far;
If something is named, then it has been said -
As told as an empty jar."

The Maiden, she smiled, and said to her foe,
"I see that our game must end,
For the answer to my riddle, you'll find
Is a person's dearest friend.

Obviously, you are a creature of greed,
And of that no doubt you are glad,
Yet of all the treasures you ever collected,
A friend you have never had.

A friend may speak what is not the truth,
Yet still be true to your honor;
And I can show you an old friend of mine
With nary a wrinkle upon her.

A friend is always close to your heart,
Even when miles away;
And since you, Dragon, have still to learn,
I have one more thing to say.

Every person has a name,
Even your closet friend;
Yet the story of friendship is never told,
It is a saga that has no end."

The Dragon sighed, and said to the Maiden,
"I see that you have won;"
He bowed his head before her and said,
"M'lady, thy will be done."

The Maiden merely said to the Dragon,
"Be off to from whence you came;
There is nothing that I desire of you,
Just the knowledge I won the game."

At that the Dragon thanked her and flew
Into the evening gloom;
The Maiden, she sighed and went into her house
And danced in a hundred rooms.