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## Old Folks at Home

By Harry Buschman



It was late afternoon as Nogard limped painfully to the door of the cave he shared with his wife Rondag. He peered outside to see what the weather was like. Nogard was a very old dragon – just about as old as dragons get, and he rarely ventured beyond the front door of his cave anymore. His eyesight was faulty too, but he could still see the ruins of the distant castle – fallen into disrepair. Gone were the Lords, the Ladies and the Knights who had pledged their lives to defeat him.

In a cracked voice he uttered a half-hearted roar to establish his dominance over the wasted landscape that no one wanted any part of to begin with. He huffed a puff of smoke to show that he was still capable of doing so, and then retreated into the depths of his cave to dream of days gone by.

Nogard had seen better days, that's for sure. The empty suits of armor hung in long rows along the walls of the cave. The suits were dented, rusted and picked clean of the knights that once inhabited them. They hadn't been all that tasty or nourishing to begin with, Nogard reminded himself – tough, stringy and full of bones. The horses they rode were far more nourishing. He smiled when he thought of the lavish suppers he shared with his wife, Rondag. There were steamed horse entrees. Bat juice cocktails and pickled knights for appetizers, followed by candlelight and old dragon marching songs from Jurassic antiquity. "Those were the days," he sighed.

Nogard retreated to his favorite niche in the corner and picked up his claw file. Rondag looked at him piercingly, "Why do you bother to sharpen your claws?" she asked.

“I don’t know,” he sighed. “If something comes along – who knows, I should be ready.”

“Nothing’s coming. You know that.”

Nogard shrugged and put the claw file down again. “She may nag a little,” he thought, “but she is right, I am not much of a provider these days.”

“I’m sorry, Rondag,” he said. “Perhaps I should sally forth and ... “

“Don’t be silly,” she interrupted. “You can’t sally, you can barely walk to the cavern entrance. How far do you think you’d get out there?”

Nogard stood and spread his leathery wings. “I can still hold my own out there ... “ he bristled.

“A raccoon would carry you off!” she laughed. “Face it Nogard, you’re old. I am old too. We’ve had our day, the castle is a shambles and the entire landscape has grown to seed.” She began sweeping the floor of the cave. “We will live on bat droppings and fungus. It is the way of the world.”

“Yield varlot!” Both Nogard and Rondag were shocked to see a thin figure in rusty armor astride a very disreputable barnyard horse. “Forward Rocinante!” The figure held a bent lance aloft and urged his reluctant horse to enter the cave.

“Just our luck,” muttered Rondag. “Another mouth to feed.”

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