

Friday Snippet: from MOONROADS

By Holly Lisle

I wrote this and liked it. It's a bit after the last snippet, but not so much that you can't ellipse the missing action and figure out things have not gone well.

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The dragon said, "It was quite clever on their part. And sure as sunrise in the morning. Because no one who walks into my lair walks back out. The bones of my victims line the passages, and the screams of the sacrifices who have been thrown to me echo still through all these chambers. Your deaths will end a lot of people's plans, and bring joy to some nasty fellows."

"But," I said. "But. You know the truth. And you do not sound like you love the rich old men and all their power. Surely you'll let us go."

"Surely I won't," the dragon said. "If any lived who had walked into my domain, do you think humans or nightlings would still fear me? Do you not think they would then send in hunters to kill me for my skin, and meat, and bones. Do you not think a pack of them would sneak in here intent upon claiming my head to hang above their fireplaces, forever after to have the bragging rights for having killed me?"

His head lowered until it lay almost on the floor, and he said, "None who walk into my lair walk back out. None. Not

even little human girls who have my sympathy. “

His great jaws gaped wide, and he roared to deafen us both. We screamed. Oh, Spirit and little gods preserve me, but I screamed until I was sure my throat would tear itself apart. I was in his mouth, his teeth a cage around me, and Catri was with me. His tongue pushed at me, at her, and I toppled into a great bag of skin I thought must be his stomach, and Catri was gone. I kept screaming. Screaming, and flailing. I had my dagger yet, and I tried to stab anything, anything.

I did not even scratch him. Catri was gone, though I could hear her screaming, too. And beyond the gaps between the dragon's teeth, which the light around my neck still showed me, I heard cheering from a distance.

The cheering of men and monsters.

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