

## **Tamara and the Storm Flute**

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Long ago when the world was young and magic was not hidden so well as it is today, there was a young dragoness named Tamara. She lived with her family in a beautiful castle at the foot of the misty mountains, overlooking the great plains and woodlands that spread out before them. Like all children, Tamara tried so hard to be good, but she was a curious young dragon, and she had more than her share of trouble. It's not that she was a mischievous child, quite to the contrary, for she never meant to misbehave, but things just happened and she'd find herself in trouble once again. Her curious nature did have a way of getting her into mischief, more often than her brothers and sisters in fact. This story is what happened one time when her curiosity got the better of her.

Now Tamara's father, a wise old dragon, was very important and very powerful, for he was one of the keepers of the knowledge passed down from the very birth of the world. With his knowledge came the use of magic, and he was entrusted with several enchanted items. Some of these were of lesser value, but others were more powerful; of the more-important items was a magic flute.

Cast out of pure silver and shining with its power, this was no ordinary flute, for it was capable of controlling the winds and the weather, just with notes played upon it by its skilled owner. Tamara's father used the flute to keep the weather running smoothly, playing soft notes to bring gentle breezes to drift across the land, softly pushing the clouds along in the sky. He could also bring stronger winds or the rains if they were called for, but he played the flute with such skill and determination, that even at those times the weather was always under his control.

In those days, the rains were never violent, not coming with angry clouds or crashing bolts of thunder. Instead they came in gentle showers, washing and refreshing the earth with their soft caresses. They were always under the command of Tamara's father as he played the flute with careful and deliberate control. At that time the world had never known of angry storms, or of torrential downpours forcing their way down upon it, and if things had been different these tempests may never have come into being. However, change does have a way of happening, and this time it came about with the help of one young dragon's curiosity.

Like her brothers and sisters, Tamara was very interested in her father's magic, especially with the mysterious power of his enchanted flute. Many times she'd watch him as he'd sit on the upper terrace of the castle, playing the flute near sunset. The last golden rays of the day would shine off the beautiful instrument as he brought on the gentle night breezes.

Now also like her brothers and sisters, Tamara knew well enough to leave her father's magic alone. However, day after day she became more curious of the flute and its secret powers, and she knew she must find out more about it. As time went on and she became even more fascinated with it, she took to sneaking around her father's study where he kept all of his enchanted items and old tomes of knowledge.

She never actually entered his study of course, at least not at first. She did however dare to peer into the hallways and rooms adjoining it, where she and her brothers and sisters were not allowed to go. As her curiosity grew, she also began to watch her father play the magic flute from a closer distance. She was still safely secluded in the shadows of her hiding spots, but now getting a better look at him as he played the instrument. As she watched, she saw his muzzle pressed against the mouth of the flute, lips pursed as he blew the soft notes through it. His fingers deftly sliding over the holes, he released the beautiful music that brought the soft winds and gentle rains.

This continued for quite some time, until Tamara became even bolder with her forays near her father's study. Then she even dared to open the door and look into the forbidden room, gazing upon its mysterious secrets. All throughout her secret explorations, Tamara was never discovered by her father as she trespassed into his enchanted domain. Perhaps she was as clever as she thought she was being with all of her sneaking about, or perhaps he knew what she was doing all along and was allowing her to continue, that she might learn something from her disobedience. Whatever it was, she paid no heed to it, and continued her clandestine explorations, confident in the thought that she could maintain her secrecy.

Finally her curiosity got the better of her and Tamara knew that she must hold the magic flute in her hands, if only just once. She needed to try using her own lips at making its sweet music, feeling the gentle winds come under her command. Now, once she had made up her mind to do this, there was no stopping her, and she resolved to try out the power of the flute as soon as possible.

That night, long after the other members of her family had gone to sleep, Tamara tiptoed through the castle. The taloned nails of her toes made just the tiniest of scratches on the stone floors, just barely disturbing the quiet of the halls. Sneaking down from her bedroom, she made her way to her father's study, and easing open the large wooden door she came into the world of forbidden enchantments. Pausing just briefly, she hesitated as she looked around the room and its arcane artifacts. Walking over to the farther shelf, she then reached out for the flute, taking it from where it lay at rest on a silken pillow the color of deep crimson, its fabric contrasting with the shimmering silver of the flute.

Grabbing the instrument, she left the room and hurried quickly outside of the castle. She broke into a soft run as she went out the gate, dashing quickly into the cover of the woods. The light of the moon guiding her journey, she made her way into the forest, away from the castle and towards a small clearing she knew about, and where she played quite frequently.

Reaching the clearing she stopped. Now safely out of hearing range from the castle, she became even bolder as she looked down at the treasure she held in her hands. Her eyes sparkling and her tail twitching lightly in excitement behind her, she gazed upon the splendid beauty of the flute, as it shone in the moonlight against the sapphire hue of her skin. Running her fingertips down its smooth metal surface, her lips pursed in a confident smile. Her forked tongue flicked gently over her teeth as she beheld the power of the flute before her.

Before long she was holding the instrument to her lips, and after the briefest of pauses, she blew a single note into it. She must have had a gift for playing it, or maybe it was simply a dragon's natural affinity for magic, but whatever it was her fingers found the right position, and her lips formed the perfect shape. With her first try, the first breath of air that escaped her, she'd

formed a perfect note. She was delighted to hear the tone escaping from the flute, the beautiful sound filling the silence of the night.

Continuing, blowing harder, she soon found the way to vary the notes and to form music. Beaming with pride she continued, as she felt the breezes stir around her. Her fingers darting gracefully over the silver body of the instrument, she formed melodies that welled up within her, yearning for release by the flute. Her spirit soaring as the gentle winds ruffled her cloak, the tip of her tail twitched, dancing with the flow of the music as she sat there in the clearing with her pilfered artifact of wondrous power.

As the music flowed through her and the winds continued to pick up, she soon noticed the soft drops of rain falling upon her. It was surprising at first, but only a momentary distraction as she welcomed the gentle rains. She reveled in the knowledge that the weather was responding to her commands, at her beck and call, ready to perform for her as wished. Playing on, letting the warm summer rain splash upon her, the notes of her song slowly began to grow in their power.

Spurred on by her excitement, she didn't notice the change, which was gradual at first, but persistent. As the melodies of her song began to grow in force, the tempo of the notes building slowly, her playing began to become more frenzied. Lost in the excitement of the song, the power of the instrument and its control over the world forced its way upon her. She was drawn into it as the flute urged her to build the energy of the music, pulling her further into the manic power of the song, as the winds picked up around her.

She first noticed the change when the winds began to howl and the rain was coming down on her with more insistence. Its touch was no longer the caress of a gentle shower, but instead a stream of larger drops falling upon her. Not only had the weight of the rain increased as the winds had picked up strength, but the temperature had dropped too, and the cold water now drenched her cloak, and continued to fall upon her.

Gasping, she tried to stop playing the flute, but found she was lost in its power, the forces of the song now working their way on her, urging her on. Continuing with the rapid fire of the notes, her fingers danced along with the manic melodies, as if of their own volition. Lost in the power of the flute and its magic, which was much too strong for such a novice magician to hope to control, she could only huddle against the wind and the rain. Ducking her head, she tried to get out of the weather's assault, but it was to no avail. The storm continued to bear down on her, and the wild music from the flute refused to cease.

Crouching there, she cringed against the elements now unleashed upon her. The world had now been awakened to the full potential of the weather. Unrestrained for the first time, its natural fierceness was free to run rampant, untamed by the small measure of control she had over the flute. Now that the elements were free to do their bidding, they jumped at the power given to them, racing forward, threatening to plummet out of control, as the land was ravaged by a tempest the likes of which had never been seen before.

With the loud crashes of the thunder echoing in her ears, Tamara curled up against herself for protection. The angry whine of the wind drowned out the music of her forced playing, but it did not diminish its effect. The energy continued to stream out from the flute, springing up as if it had a mind of its own. The blinding flashes of lightning illuminating the woods in a nightmarish display, the torrential downpour of the rain was dumped upon her, the ground

becoming a sodden mess beneath her.

Her sobs of fear and tears of sorrow lost amidst the forces of the storm, she suddenly felt strong hands gripping at her. Lifting up her head, she saw her father standing there. His face was a mask of confusion, anger and concern as he looked down upon her, his features illuminated with another flash of lightning.

Grabbing the flute from her hands, he brought it to his lips and quickly began playing his own music on it. At first the notes were just as frenzied and manic as the wild song Tamara had been playing, but gradually he forced his will upon the instrument, and the power of the world itself, lessening the intensity of the melody. As Tamara watched on with awe and fear, the powerful dragon regained his control over the elements, as he forced the song back into submission. The tempo of the notes slowing, the melodies became calm and leisurely once again.

As the power and intensity of the notes coming from the flute diminished, the weather obeyed in turn. The rain calmed and then dried up, the angry winds decreased until all that remained were the familiar and welcome night breezes. Those too dissipated as the magician worked the last of his spell on the flute, letting one last single note escape before removing the instrument from his lips.

Placing the flute in a pocket of his cloak, he then turned to look upon his daughter once again. Huddling there, drenched from the rain and cowering beneath him on the muddy ground, Tamara looked up at her father with fear and shame. His face clouded over with anger and disappointment he watched her silently. A small gleam of concern flickering in his eyes, he reached out to help her up, and led her small, shivering form back to the castle. As she quietly followed him, she hung her head and dragged her tail limply behind her, his silence alone was enough of a scolding.

In time of course, Tamara was forgiven, like all children are when they make mistakes and misbehave. Tamara's father was kind and wise, and her punishment was not too unjust or severe, but from that time on she'd had to live with what she'd done. For when she'd unleashed the power of the storms, the power her father had been so careful to contain, the world was not so eager to give its newfound freedom up. Her father was still able to control the weather, but from time to time the forces of nature would resist his bidding, if only for the shortest of times.

It was then once again when the winds would pick up, whining with the downpour of the rain, the flash of the lightning and crashing of the thunder. Sometimes in the howling of the winds during these storms Tamara could almost imagine that the elements were calling out to her, remembering the freedom she'd unwittingly granted them and beckoning her to come out and play amidst them once again.

In time the world got used to these changes, and the unpredictability of the weather, when the storms would sometimes come and frolic across the lands. As she grew older Tamara was no longer haunted by the realization of what she'd done, learning to accept it. However, even when she herself was a master magician, the coming rains would serve as a reminder, if only briefly, of that fateful night long ago when she'd tried to tame the power of the storm flute.

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