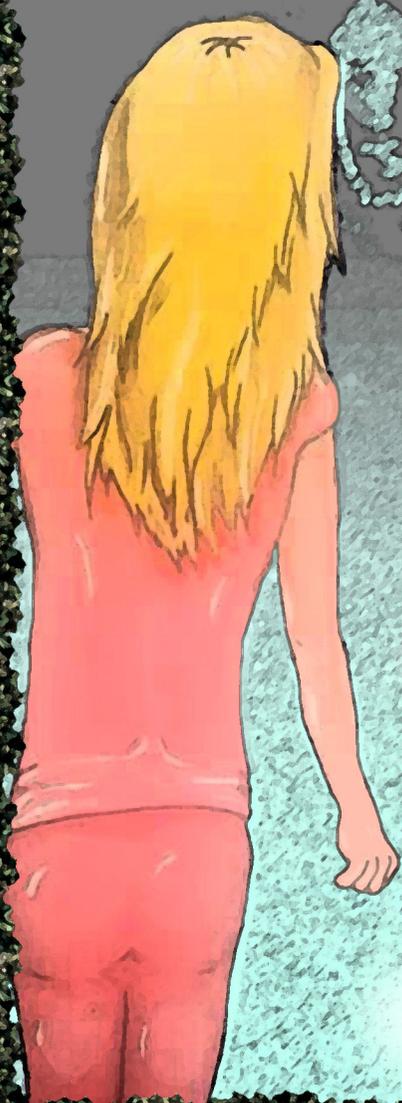


Roxanne
& the
Dragon Mirror



I'm Cute,
but Dangerous

Michele L. Hinton

Roxanne & the Dragon Mirror
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For My Niece

Roxanne

Chapter 1

Another Dimension — Another Time

After him!” shouted the captain of the guards. “If he gets away, the Queen will feed us all to her dragons!”

Warren looked behind him. His illusion had only fooled Jacara’s men temporarily. After crossing the drawbridge to Dragonwick Castle, he dismounted his horse. “Away, Sheba!”

“I stay,” Sheba replied.

“Don’t argue!” Warren exclaimed. “There’s no hope for me in this moment. I look to fight another day. Save yourself and your clan, if you can.”

The horse nodded. “Sheba go. But will live until see Warren again.” She turned and galloped back across the drawbridge.

The young wizard’s apprentice took a quick look around. The situation was the same here as it was at Rose Hill Palace — nothing moved. Dragonwick’s guards stood immobile. Even a dog he spotted was stone still with its paw posed behind its ear in mid-scratch. Warren ran to the great wheel to attempt to raise the drawbridge, but he hadn’t the strength to turn it by himself. Running his fingers through his hair in frustration he shouted, “I can’t believe this is happening!”

He heard the sound of galloping horses coming toward the castle. Jacara’s guards would be upon him soon. Abandoning the wheel, he continued on his mission and ran toward the royal palace and Master Trebor’s chambers before they caught up to him.

Upon entering the great hall, he found the same thing as outside. King

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Robert was sitting at the head of a banquet table as he and his guests were raising their goblets in the midst of a toast to his Queen, Marianne, in celebration of her birthday. Warren had a feeling that if he didn't figure out something to do, everyone would be toasting her for eternity.

Why he was the only one spared from this tragic event — he hadn't a clue. The last words from Master Trebor to him were, "The book," and then he too fell under Jacara's evil magic. Warren knew exactly what his mentor was referring to. He had been fortunate enough to make his way to the horsemen's courtyard to escape on Sheba before Jacara's guards took after him.

Warren weaved between the statues, which were once people, taking care not to touch them for fear the spell they were under might fall upon him. He was also concerned about accidentally knocking one of them over and possibly injuring someone. Upon reaching Master Trebor's chambers, he entered and barred the thick, oak door behind him. When he turned around, he saw that the room had been completely torn apart. Tables were over turned and his master's experiments were destroyed. Powders, elixirs and potions were scattered and the containers smashed. It was apparent that Jacara's men had been here earlier. He was relieved that none had been posted here.

"The book!" Overcoming his momentary shock, he went to a wall and pushed a combination of stones hoping to reveal the book's hiding place. Warren breathed a sigh of relief. "It's still there." So was the sack of crystals — the remnants of the crystal wand he'd accidentally broken a few weeks ago. After that unfortunate mishap, he thought surely Master Trebor would have discharged him as his apprentice. But his mentor just picked up the pieces, put them in a small sack and said they would still be useful — on a limited basis.

His reminiscing was broken by the sound of men pounding at the door. He quickly opened the book and thumbed through it. "A spell, a spell. Ahhh!" he exclaimed, as he slammed both palms on the table beside the book. "There's so many. I don't know what to use!"

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The men trying to break down the door didn't help his concentration. Warren looked up from the book a moment and saw that the mirror in the corner was unbroken. Struck by inspiration, one of Master Trebor's last lessons came to mind. He turned to the page in the book, took a piece of crystal from the sack and walked to the mirror. It was a dragon mirror. There were very few like it, and only the greatest of wizards could create one. Closing his eyes, he stood before it. "Don't mess this up, Warren!" he told himself. He held the crystal before the mirror and said the words. When he finished, a duplicate mirror magically appeared beside it. He said the second part of the spell and felt a tingling sensation throughout his body as if he was being drained. When the feeling subsided, the duplicate mirror disappeared — as did the crystal. He sighed. "I hope it worked."

Warren looked toward the door when he heard a cracking sound. The guards would soon be upon him. He returned the book and the crystals to their niche in the wall, closed it and ran to a wardrobe closet in the opposite corner in a feeble attempt to hide. Just then the guards burst through the door. He was seen. One of the men opened the cabinet and roughly jerked him out.

"Foolish boy," said the guard. "There's no place for you to hide. Prepare to die!" He pulled his knife and was about to plunge it into Warren's heart, when the captain of the guard entered.

"Stop! You idiot!" The captain grabbed the man's hand. "He's a wizard's apprentice. You know the law. Those with magic in their blood have to die by natural causes. Queen Jacara was specific about that."

"Queen Jacara!" Warren sneered. "Jacara is no queen. Her sister, Tawanna, reigns over all magic within the province of Dragonwick."

"You know very well, Tawanna disappeared," the guard replied. "The law states that if a ruler has been missing for more than a fortnight with no word, the next in line rules until her return. Jacara is now Queen." The captain of the guard folded his arms and glared at Warren. "How is it you didn't fall under Queen Jacara's magic?"

"That's for me to know!" Warren replied. That was a question he would

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like to know himself.

“Doesn’t matter,” replied the captain. He looked around the room and then turned to his men and gave instructions.

The last thing Warren remembered was being struck on the back of the head. He fell unconscious to the floor.

Rose Hill Palace

Warren’s horse, Sheba, galloped back to Rose Hill Palace to try and convince her kind to leave. A few from the various clans of horsemen, who had no allegiance to the human that rode them, had run off when she and her human had escaped. But most would not leave the human they were bonded to behind.

She was about to enter the horsemen’s courtyard, but hesitated and peered through the gate. Evil magic was being done to those that stayed. Their chestnut colored bodies and black hair and tails were now drained of all color. They were completely white with lifeless looking black eyes.

Sheba saw a female human standing on a platform. A moment later, she began to speak to all of them. Normally, the only human she could understand was Warren, the human she was bonded with. But when this female human spoke a few words unknown to her, the next set of words she *did* understand. “Find your clansmen and bring them to me,” Sheba heard the female say. “If they do not come — kill them!”

That was enough said for Sheba, and she galloped away before she too was caught. The task before her was daunting. She had to gather all of her clan and send them to other clans of horsemen to give them warning. Those that had bonded with their humans had to be convinced to leave them, or what had happened to those horsemen in the courtyard at Rose Hill could happen to them.

This Dimension — Present Day

Roxanne Reed was excited to finally see what her new room was going to be like. Her father, Rob Reed, Sr., had recently bought a house that was over a hundred years old. It was the “fixer upper” he had always wanted, and it was in desperate need of — fixing up. For the past three weeks, her bedroom had been the living room, which she had to share with her older brother, Robby. The previous owners had sealed off the upper level, but today, her father and brother had cut a hole in the wall that blocked the stairway. “Well, guys — let’s see what we’ve got upstairs,” said their dad.

They passed through the hole and proceeded up the steps. Roxanne took a sniff of the air and turned up her nose. “It smells like...” She hesitated a moment to think of a word to describe it. “...like old stuff up here.”

“Yeah — like Granddaddy’s attic,” said Robby.

Rob, Sr. knocked away a few cobwebs. “Once we’ve opened up the windows to air it out and do a little cleaning, that old smell will go away.”

When they reached the top of the stairs, Roxanne looked around. “How cool is this!” The upper level had two bedrooms, a full bathroom and a second kitchen, although it was missing the stove and refrigerator. The Realtor had told them that, at one time, the house had been converted into a duplex, but for some unknown reason, the previous owners had completely blocked off the upper level, including the secondary entrance to it. The property had also been vacant for seven years.

Roxanne and her brother were to share the upstairs, until he went back to college in the fall. After that, the whole upstairs was going to be like having her own apartment, so it didn’t matter that Robby called dibs on the larger room.

Roxanne, or Rocky as everyone called her, was thirteen going on seventeen. She was your average pre-teen, and an almost straight “A” student. The blonde haired, brown-eyed girl dreamt of the day she would be able to drive a car — specifically a baby blue Porsche, her ride of choice. But when she had mentioned it to her father, he just laughed and told her

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to save her money.

Rocky opened the door to her room and peered in. It looked empty except for the cobwebs. The walls were a boring off white. She walked in. “Daddy, can I paint my walls lime green?” she called out.

“It’s your room,” he replied.

She walked to the middle of the room and envisioned what it would look like with its painted walls and florescent pink and black accessories. But then she turned around and spotted what the door had hidden. Her eyes widened and she ran from her room screaming.

“What is it! What’s wrong!” both her father and brother exclaimed.

“It’s huge and hideous!” Roxanne cringed

Robby laughed. “What did you see? A spider?”

“If only,” she replied. “Look behind the door. It scared the crap out of me.”

Her father and brother entered and saw what had upset her. “Geez!” Robby exclaimed. “I’d hate to run into that thing. It looks like a dragon statue.”

Rob Sr. examined it. “Actually, I think it’s an old mirror.”

Roxanne stood beside her father. “Not much of one. Someone painted the mirror part black, and look what they painted across it.

“Do not fix the mirror,” Robby read. “Hmmm — maybe it’s cursed.”

“Cursed!” Roxanne exclaimed.

“Quit teasing your sister, Robby. It’s probably some kid’s idea of a joke. This house has been vacant for a while.”

Roxanne stared at the mirror. It was the only thing that didn’t fit in with her modern décor. Across the top of the mirror were a crescent moon and a star on one side and the sun and a cluster of stars on the other side. The full length mirror was surrounded by the ornately carved dragon. It had horns on the top of its head as well on either side. Its jaws also had small tooth-like horns. To her it almost looked demon-like.

“Daddy, what about this old mirror?” Roxanne turned up her nose. “Can we move it out?”

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“I guess we can,” he replied.

Her brother laughed. “You — don’t want a mirror?”

She folded her arms and glared at him. “Look at it! It’s all blacked out. Not to mention it’s ugly.”

“Well, if you don’t want it, I’ll take it. It’s kind of cool looking.”

“Go for it,” Roxanne replied.

Robby examined the mirror more closely and saw words carved into the wood surround on both sides. “Look at this.” He read it. “*Oh glass that casts my image...*” He read the other side and read, “*...Reflect me to the other side.*” He folded his arms and stared at it. “Strange words to carve into a mirror.”

“Well, right now it’s not reflecting anything,” Roxanne replied. “I just want it out of here.”

The three of them strained to try and move it, but it wouldn’t budge. “It’s like someone bolted it to the floor.” Rob, Sr. examined the bottom. “Hmmm — I don’t see any bolts.” He looked at Roxanne and sighed. “I’m afraid you’re stuck with it for the time being, Rocky.”

She rolled her eyes. “Oh, great!” She cocked her head to the side and thought of how she could at least make it fit into her room design ideas. “Can I paint it fluorescent pink?”

“I don’t think so,” he replied. “It’s an antique. In the meantime, when you get around to it, you can start scraping the paint off the glass. to make it usable.”

Robby grinned. “Then you can stand in front of it all day and look at yourself.”

“Ha! Ha! Very funny.” She looked back at the mirror and read the message. “What about the warning not to fix it?”

“Like I said, someone’s idea of a joke,” her dad said.

“You know, they say that this house is haunted,” Robby said. “Maybe they had the upstairs walled off to keep the ghost up here.”

She raised her eyebrows. “You mean I have ghosts in my room!”

“That’s enough,” Rob Sr. warned. “The previous owners probably had

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the upper floor walled off to save on the heating bill. The Realtor said an elderly couple used to live here, and they never went upstairs.” He laughed. “The both of you have been watching too many horror movies lately.”

Roxanne giggled. “Well, if I get slimed, I’m moving downstairs.”

“Hey! I have a great idea.” Robby grinned. “If we get the ghost to slime the room, we won’t have to paint. After all, slime is lime green.”

Roxanne just sneered and stuck her tongue out at him.

Their father laughed. “Come on, you two. I’m hungry. Your choice — Mickey D’s or pizza?”

The vote was unanimous. They went downstairs and the three of them headed to their favorite pizza place.

Chapter 2

A week had passed since opening the upstairs. The framing around the entrance to the upper floor was completed, the cobwebs cleared away, the painting was done and the beds and boxes had been hauled up. It took her a couple of hours, but after Roxanne hung her posters, she was done. She lounged across her florescent pink bedspread and called her best friends, Lauren and Adam, to tell them about her new room.

A few minutes later, her father came upstairs to check out her progress. “Good job, Rocky. Let’s see if you can keep it this way.”

“It will be,” she replied. “The only thing out of place is that ugly mirror.” She walked over to it and was able to chip off a piece of paint about the size of her thumbnail. Afterward she felt a slight tingling sensation, but it went away, and she thought no more of it.

“Sorry, I’m afraid you’re stuck with it. Your brother and I tried to pry it up, but it’s like the base was built into the floor, and before you ask, I’m not about to cut into the floor to get it out.”

That was Roxanne’s next question. She decided she would have to take the good with the bad, and when she had an opportunity, she would scrape off the paint.

Roxanne woke the next morning, made her bed and arranged the pillows and stuffed animals on it until she thought it looked perfect. When everything was in its proper place, she went to the bathroom. She’d only been in there for forty minutes when Robby banged on the door.

“How much longer are you going to be?”

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“When I’m done!” she shouted, as she played with her hair in the mirror, trying to decide how to fix it.

“One of these days that mirror is gonna suck you in!”

Roxanne rolled her eyes. “Alright, I’m coming out!”

Her brother was leaning against the doorframe with his arms folded. “It’s about time,” he fussed as she exited.

She just stuck her tongue out at him as she passed. When she reached the doorway to her room, she stopped and her jaw dropped. Her room was in total chaos! Clothing was strewn everywhere, her neatly made bed was in disarray and posters were half-hanging off the walls. Roxanne was furious. She went to the bathroom door and pounded on it. “Robby!”

“What! You’ve had your turn,” he shouted back.

“You trashed my room!”

He opened the door. “What are you talking about?”

“You messed it up! I’m telling Daddy.”

Robby left the bathroom to see what she was talking about. “So what’s wrong with it? The only thing I see wrong with this room is your — *slime* green walls. So what’s trashed about it?”

Roxanne’s eyes went wide. Everything was neat as a pin. “But it was a mess just a minute ago!”

“I think you were dreaming.”

“It’s the ghost. My room is haunted!”

“Rocky, there’s no such thing as ghosts.” He rolled his eyes. “I think your imagination is running away with you.” He headed back to the bathroom.

Roxanne entered her room cautiously. She wondered how she could dream something when she was wide-awake. She got dressed and went to her laptop to check her e-mails. When she flipped up the screen and turned it on, the words — *fix the mirror* — appeared. She quickly got up from her chair, and it fell to the floor. She ran to her brother’s room and got him to come with her. When they looked at the screen, it was just her home page.

“Rocky, you have ghosts on the brain!” Robby snickered and then

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added, "I'm not a ghost whisperer. So the next time there's an incident — Who ya' gonna call?"

Roxanne sneered. "Ghost busters," they said at the same time.

The next night Roxanne spent on the couch downstairs. She had her dream room, but it was haunted. Nothing her father or brother had said convinced her otherwise. She called her two friends, Lauren and Adam, and told them about it. They were both looking forward to seeing a haunted bedroom and were on their way over. When they arrived, she took them upstairs.

"Awesome room!" said Lauren. "I wish I could have my room painted any color I wanted. I've got boring ol' white."

"No wonder this room is haunted. Lime green and florescent pink!" Adam turned up his nose. "It's obviously a male ghost. If it *is* haunted, I'm surprised the ghost hasn't slimed it. No wait!" he said with a laugh. "Slime is lime green, so maybe it was slimed and you just can't tell."

"Very funny, Adam," Roxanne folded her arms and glared at him. "You sound like Robby."

Adam ignored her. "Where's this dragon mirror you talked about?"

"Brace yourselves," Roxanne warned. "It's behind the door."

Lauren's eyes widened, and she drew a deep breath in shock. "Scary isn't the word for it. I'd say nightmare! Maybe if you paint it pink?"

Roxanne sighed. "Daddy already said no."

"You two are crazy," Adam said. "It's bad to the bone. I wish I had it in my room."

Roxanne told them how it was affixed to the floor and moving it was impossible. She moved the door to hide the hideous mirror.

"So," Lauren said, changing the subject. "When does the ghost come out?"

"I don't know. I slept downstairs last night."

Adam walked around the room. "Maybe we should do an exorcism."

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“Like the ghost movies on TV?” Roxanne asked.

“That sounds like fun,” said Lauren. She then laughed, “But if your head starts to turn backwards, Rocky, I’m out’a here!”

The three of them laughed. “Have you got a Ouija board?” Adam asked.

“Robby has one,” Roxanne replied. They opened the door to his room and saw wall-to-wall clothes scattered everywhere.

“Maybe your ghost moved in here,” said Lauren.

“No,” Roxanne shrugged. “It’s always like this.”

“Now this is a room a ghost could live in comfortably,” Adam chuckled.

Roxanne rummaged through her brother’s many games and found the old Ouija board. They ran into him on the way back to her room.

“Rocky, what were you guys doing in my room?”

“Just borrowing your Ouija board. We’re going to try and talk to the ghost.”

“Hey, that sounds like fun. Mind if I play?” he asked.

Roxanne cocked her head sideways. “We’re not playing. This is serious stuff.”

“Whatever!” Robby replied as he followed them into her room.

Roxanne placed the board on a table in her room. The four of them gathered around it and put a finger on the pointer.

“So, who’s going to ask the first question?” Adam asked.

“I’ll ask,” said Robby when the three hesitated. “Is there a ghost in this room?”

They watch the pointer move slowly toward — **No** — in the right-hand corner of the board.

“You were pushing it, Robby,” Roxanne accused.

Robby frowned. “Hmm — I was, but I was pushing to the — **Yes** — in the other corner.

“I was pushing it to the **Yes** too,” said Adam. “I’ll ask a question.” They placed their fingers on the pointer. “What are you, if not a ghost?”

The pointer moved around the board to different letters. “**W-I-Z-A-R-D**,” they spelled out together. The four of them looked at each other and

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at the same time said, “I wasn’t pushing!”

“My turn,” said Lauren. “Are you a good wizard?” The pointer moved to **Yes**.

“That was a dumb question,” said Adam. “If it was a bad wizard, it would’a said yes anyway.”

“Me next,” said Roxanne.

“Hold on, Rocky,” said her brother. “This time don’t touch the pointer and see what happens.”

They took their hands away, and Roxanne asked her question. “What do you want?”

The four of them watched the board, spellbound. There was a slight hesitation and each was wondering if the other *had* pushed the pointer previously, but then it slowly moved to the letters and spelled the words — **fix the mirror**. Suddenly, the pointer rose from the board, floated toward the old mirror and fell to the floor.

The four of them got up from the table and ran from the room. Adam shut the door. “Holy Harry Potter!”

Roxanne saw her brother head for the stairs. “Where’re you going?”

“To get something to remove the paint from the mirror,” he replied and then was out of sight.

“Ah — I think it’s time for me to go home,” said Lauren. “I’ve seen all the Harry Potter movies. I don’t think I want to be in a real one!”

“I don’t blame you,” said Roxanne. “I’d leave too, but I live here.”

“You big chickens!” said Adam. “Let’s fix the mirror and find out what the wizard, or whatever it is, wants. Then maybe he’ll leave you alone. Kinda like in that show Ghost Whisperer. Fix their problem and they go away”

Roxanne sighed. “It’s worth a try.” She looked at Lauren and said pitifully, “Please stay.”

“Yeah, Lauren.” Adam laughed. “Pretend you’re Herminie from the Harry Potter movies”.

Lauren sighed. “I guess I’ll stay.”