

# The Captive

(Mercedes Lackey)

am G am  
She sits and she weeps and she weeps all alone  
C G C E  
In a prison disguised as a palace  
am G am  
She was bought by a lord for her wealth and her land  
C E am  
She was sold by her father for power

C G C  
Now she who was free as a bird in the wood  
am G C E  
Is caged in a prison of gold  
am G am  
And wing-clipped she mourns for the life she has lost,  
C E am  
The wild swan that no one could hold

Below in the hall, where her lord sits to drink,  
He boasts how he conquered a bride  
“Just a touch of the stick, did she not run away?  
As she did, as a child, oh she tried.

“But I was prepared for her tricks, you have seen  
I’ve no forests, just crop-lands and fields  
All my horses are guarded, my sentries alert  
And ‘gainst Elf-magic, cold iron-shields

“Oh, we caught her before she was out of the gate  
And I taught her to never try more!”  
What I get I will hold”; he was raising his cup  
When a sentry appeared at the door

“There’s a mountebank, sir, a magician,” he said,  
“That for shelter and hope of reward,  
Says he’d entertain you, sir, and all of your guests”  
“Oh, is he any good?” asks the Lord.

“Why judge for yourself?” cried the mage at the door,  
Though whence he came, no one could say  
And with that he began to produce wonderous things  
Such marvels their breaths stole away

When at last he was done, they shook off their trance  
And the lord tossed him gold with a smile  
Saying, “Well done, sir mage. Would my Lady were here,  
But she finds evening gatherings a trial.”

“Good, my Lord,” said the mage with a low, humble bow,  
Through his eyes were not humble at all  
“I pledge in the morning before I depart,  
In the meadow in front of your hall,

“I will show you more wonders than you have yet seen  
Bid your lady come watch if she will  
“She will come,” said the Lord, “I’ll escort her, myself”  
Though the mage smiled, his eyes were cold still

Came the morning, assembled in front of the hall  
Were all that could get leave to be  
And the Lord and his Lady, his grip on her arm  
Leaving bruises where no one could see

Then the mage moved his hands and the crowd hushed its  
noise  
Each one staring as hard as he could  
And at last, she looked up and he gestured once more  
And the people froze still where they stood

Now he walked to the lady, a smile on his lips  
And a tenderer smile in his eyes  
And he took both her hands and he said,  
“You are free. What, do you find this a surprise?

“You, once the friend of the feathered and furred  
Had found yourself trapped in the net  
You were beloved of the forest’s fair folk  
Did you think that your friends would forget?

“With cold iron this brute kept the Elf lords at bay,  
Cold iron stops their magic, it’s true  
But they called upon me, who am also their friend,  
And I am as human as you.

“Now, come,” and he drew her away from the Lord,  
Who never more her lord would be  
For the joy in her face he’d have risked ten times worse  
Then he cast the last spell to set them free

Now as though from deep slumber the people awoke  
At his side then the lord felt a lack  
Saw his lady was gone, while then over his hall  
Flew two wild swans, a white and a black