



Above All Else

Dayton Idoni

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Avo is a dragon like no other. He's reclusive, he's tiny, and he can't breathe fire. He also has a knack for getting himself into trouble!

While wandering through his woodland habitat, Avo happens across a stranger in need. The chance encounter pits him against an ancient enemy, which forces him to flee the forest. During his travels, the little dragon must learn to cooperate with unlikely allies in alien lands. He must safely navigate through a world that is full of betrayal, blood-magic and malice. And finally Avo must accept the part he has to play, as foretold in the prophecies of old.

Can his body, heart, and soul survive the journey intact? Will he find sanctuary in an unknown land? Will he become a savior or a destroyer?

A 'LOVE'S AN OPEN ROAD' STORY.

Written for the 2015 'Don't Read in the Closet' event that is hosted by the M/M Romance Group.

Dear Author,

I'm a dragon shifter, and I'm the smallest of my kind. I'm small enough to sit on the shoulders of an average sized man. I might be adorable in both my forms because of my size and looks, but I have a deadly secret ability that other dragons don't have (at least to the same extent I do). Tell me Author who/what is my mate/s and how do we meet.

Photo Description:

Ribbons of autumnal sunlight penetrate the canopy of leafless trees. The silvery beams reflect off the rippling river, which winds itself amongst the roots of the ancient forest. Next to the gushing water, a blue dragon rests its claw on a gaping fish. The sapphire-scaled creature stares inquisitively into the woods, listening to the cries of an approaching stranger...

This story was written as a part of the M/M Romance Group's "**Love is an Open Road**" event. Group members were asked to write a story prompt inspired by a photo of their choice. Authors of the group selected a photo and prompt that spoke to them and wrote a short story.

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The M/M Romance Group strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Above All Else Details

Date : Published June 23rd 2015 by M/M Romance Group @ Goodreads

ISBN :

Author : Dayton Idoni

Format : ebook 107 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Dragons, Romance, M M Romance, Magic, Paranormal, Shapeshifters

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From Reader Review Above All Else for online ebook

Meep says

Thanks to the author for participating and offering this freebie.

Not rating this as I only read the first chapter, it's just not a fic for me.

The dialogue didn't seem natural to me, very formal on the part of the human and more scholar than warrior, I had difficulty imagining him and really didn't understand the pleas for help.

It also seemed strange that the Dragon was so casually sharing Dragon-facts too, if that was typical behaviour then it would all be common knowledge...

BUT I did only read the first chapter. Fantasy fans may love it.

Annie says

This was an interesting story with a good plot and well done world building. The characters were well written and there was decent development. The details were good and not overwhelming. I was very happy that there wasn't an insta-love connection between the two main characters.

Didi says

2.65 stars

It was interesting story involving dragons, tree trolls and humans. I had to hand it to author for the imagination, also the new language spoken by the treolls. Though I'd rather wish, for sentence or conversations in that lingo, to be translated to readers instead of confusing us along with the dragon for not speaking the language.

This was more fantasy and less romance, wherein one not to judge others by their look or heresay only. The tale was told from Avo the wee dragon's (view spoiler) perspective as first person, which usually made me more connected to the character. That didn't happen here though, I don't know. Perhaps the writing style or the plot that was too... all over. Not to say this was bad though. I just felt throughout reading, that this could me more.

M'rella says

I have to say, over-explaining often got in the way, which is especially annoying in a short book. I was thinking of rounding the 3.5 stars down, but the originality (and the cover) won me over.

4 stars.

Pamela Su says

A thrilling and exciting fantasy tale with an unexpectedly unique twist on the dragon myth.

I was not expecting the romance to turn out the way it did. This was good. I loved it.

Firenz says

I really enjoyed this book. A Sweet romance and a great story. What more could you want? Showing us dynamite comes in small packages.

I may have been guilty of having been tricked like Avo, by the first hot guy that meets our protagonist and appears nice.

Melissa says

["imprinting" on the first guy that appears hot/nice in a book, unless the blurb warns me otherwise (hide spoiler)]

Finnegan says

Surprisingly enjoyable! I couldn't put it down, as the action is fast-paced, and I had to know what happened next! I also liked the MC's, and have to congratulate the author on creating two very unique, original characters. I also like that the focus is less on the treoll's appearance, but on his good heart. Because I like me a pretty face, but a kind, loving personality is even more attractive. The plot was a bit much near the end, but all things considered, it deserves a good solid four stars.

Kevin says

This started out sunny and suddenly turned dark with betrayal. I hurt for the pain and injury that was irreversibly suffered. Then salvation and love came from an unexpected source. After that was a bunch of mystical mumbo-jumbo that I skimmed, some heroics, and a happily ever after.

The protagonist is a dragon shifter who is alone, in a self-imposed exile. He rescues a man seemingly in danger, and that is what forever brings him out of isolation. Aside from the villains, he and others show compassion and tolerance. There's also a bit of humor.

Verena says

Ooh, this one was full of surprises! I expected it to be good, and it was - just a different kind of good. I went in without reading other reviews, which was fortunate - this has twists and foreshadowing, so if you start and don't like some of what is happening, read on (dancing around the spoilers here with my pants down, but you'll probably know what I mean when you get there).

More often than not the fantasy elements in fantasy m/m are just a means to enhance the romance plot and woefully underdeveloped, so I tend to tone down my expectations. Here? Full plot, solid worldbuilding, lots of action and a wide range of scenery and tone. It's a fantasy story with an embedded romance, not a romance with hints of fantasy. I really enjoyed the imagery and the themes touched upon, and how the author assembled familiar fantasy elements to create something unique.

As for the romance aspect, I generally have a bit of trouble with interspecies attraction because I get stuck wondering about what would constitute physical attraction for the species concerned, and am often disappointed if human beauty is still the measure of choice (this is what really bothered me about "Daughter of Smoke and Bone", where among the vastly diverse Chimaera the ultimate beauty ideal is the "human aspect". Drove me bonkers). I mean, dragons: wouldn't they see "beauty" as glossy scales or impressive whiskers or the leatheriest wings? In this story it was partly averted - and even a little subverted - since the humanoid shape was somewhat of a common trait, but nonetheless I had a bit of trouble with Avo's appreciation of human muscles etc.(as well as with being able to picture Avo in his different forms). In the end, though, it didn't really matter, since appearance vs. inner worth was a theme of the story - so I guess the author pulled one over me and my ponderings.

The story is skillfully written with an even style and a strong voice; early on I felt there was some adjective and alliteration overload (yup), but either it was toned down later on or I stopped minding. The finale was a bit... much; I couldn't decide if it felt rushed or too crowded, but there was a lot going on and it seemed a bit messy - still satisfying, however, and I really loved that the author stuck to his decisions and that consequences were permanent. The last sentence left me with a happy smile (which is returning as I'm typing this).

Overall it was a really enjoyable, gripping read with small flaws that were wrestled to the ground by the huge fun factor. Avid fantasy readers will probably feel more at home with this, and I can see how some readers will be left wishing for more focus on the romance and a more conventional storyline. I had lots of fun reading this, however, and was tickled by the way the story challenged conventions and expectations (my own included). In the end I found myself dithering between 4 and 5 stars but decided to go with 5, because fantastic work for a free story in a limited time frame and overall yayness. I want to read more of the author's work!

(Also three cheers for the handmade cover, icing on the cake.)

Sandra says

Offered for FREE from the M/M Romance Group's Love Is An Open Road event. Thank you too all the amazing authors who participated!

Tj says

Cute little story. There were a few little niggles for me but for a short story it was rather good. I would love for the author to improve and expand this. I think it could be quite the adventure story.

Jeanne 'Divinae' says

Avo is the smallest of dragons. He outcasted himself and lives a lonesome life. He is just minding his own business when he hears the distress calls of a human in his woods. When he investigates, he see the human in the river battling a female tree troll(Treoll) and kills her. Two other Treolls attack him and Avo, doing what he thinks is best, helps the human.

Because everyone knows Treolls are dragons enemies. They had a fight between them generations ago and it left bad blood between them.

Sadly, Avo is tricked and that is how he comes to meet a Treoll named Lok'Maht. Lok'Maht is a humble Treoll who is special. Born along with Earth, he is able to heal. Overtime, Lok'Maht grows on Avo. Together they work together to escape. That is how Lok'Maht learns the truth about Avo's ability. For he is too small to breath fire.

Avo starts to see Lok'Maht in a whole new light and they travel together. Avo learns more about what truly happened back all those generations ago, that caused the great war between the dragons and the treolls. He trusts Lok'Maht and finally realizes he hates being isolated. He craves companionship and a mate. Together they work together. There are not one, but two prophecies. Avo is linked to both of them.

I really liked this story and was pleasantly surprised to see the couple didn't involve a human. The story was full of adventure and was interesting.

Mel says

I'll make it quick :)

- OMG, the cover!!! Is so cool!

- And our little dragon... loved him. Cuuuute!

- Loved the difference in appearance / race from our love interests, how it didn't really matter... They were very sweet together, a bit sappy even maybe.

- The world building was sufficient ;-) Not mind-blowing, but giving enough depths.

- The plot... Well, I think nothing to shout out about, but also not taking away from my entertainment. A bit

foreseeable, I think, most of the time.

- The characters were likeable, but felt a bit flat.
 - The writing style was engaging on the one hand, but maybe a bit awkward on the other, especially during the dialogue or inner monologue.
 - I would have loved a warning for the content of captivity and violence in captivity. I was looking for something more pleasant, I guess, and was caught by surprise.
 - I enjoyed reading this book. If you like fantasy, you should give this a go.
-

DC says

I really really liked this story. Yes, it's a fantasy but I was so drawn into it that I felt like I was there with Avo and Lok'Maht. Deceit and betrayal followed by friendship and love. A whole lot of angst and some tragedy finally heads to our MC's HEA. Open your imagination and just let yourself feel the energy in this story.
