

# SICKLE AND SPADE ARE WORTH A FORTUNE

Once upon a time an old man was dying, and he called his son to him.

“Yvonnik,” he said. “I am very poor and I have nothing to give you but my spade, for stirring up the earth, and my sickle, for reaping the corn. Use them well and they will bring you happiness.”

The young man was brave and strong and when he had buried his father, he set out into the world. He walked with his spade over his shoulder and his sickle in his hand and was soon far, far from his village. After a year and a day he came to a cornfield, in which men were busy reaping. They were working with all their might, but they were going so slowly that it took them a week to cut one swathe.

“Never have I seen such poor workers!” thought Yvonnik. “I could do as much in an hour.” He went up to them, and saw that they were using wooden sickles.



“What can your master be thinking of?” he cried. “See here.”

So saying he bent and began to cut down the corn, and soon he reached the end of the field. The reapers were filled with admiration.

“You have a treasure there, young man,” they said. “Come with us to the King, and he will give you a good price for it.”

As they had said, the King was eager to buy the metal sickle.

“I will give you in exchange three marvellous dogs,” he said. “No harm can come to you so long as they are with you. All you need to do is blow this whistle, and they will come to your aid.”

The young man thanked him and continued on his way. After another year he came to a graveyard. A corpse was stood on the wall, and not far away a group of gravediggers were digging a grave. They were working with all their might, but it was of no

use, for they had only their nails to dig with. It took them a month to dig a grave, and when someone died the King had to call together a large group of gravediggers.

“Have you no spades here?” said the young man.

“Spades? No, we have nothing like that. Besides, we have no wood or iron.”

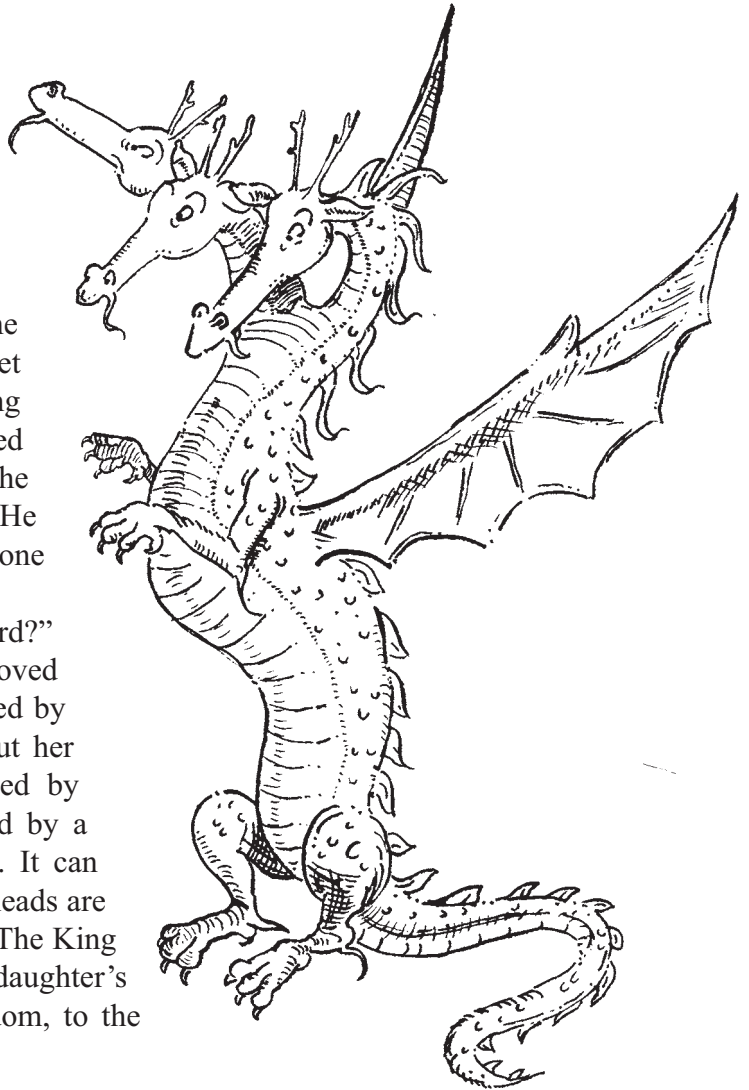
“Let me show you their uses,” said the young man. He set to work throwing the earth right and left, and before the clock in the town could strike the half hour, he had finished the grave.

The King himself had come running, and was amazed when he saw what had been done.

“Oh, give me your spade,” he said. “I will give you anything in exchange. Take my warhorse. He is cleverer than the cleverest man, and stronger than an entire army.”

The young man took the steed, mounted it, and set off with his dogs following behind. Soon his way led him to a land where all the people were in mourning. He stopped, and asked someone what was the matter.

“Alas, have you not heard?” they said. “Our beloved princess has been captured by the Caragine. He has shut her up in a castle surrounded by seven walls, and guarded by a dragon with three heads. It can only be slain if its three heads are cut off at the same time. The King has promised to give his daughter’s hand, and half his kingdom, to the



man who rescues her, but all who have tried have lost their lives. One man got as far as the dragon, but he was slain immediately; the others could not even get past the walls.”

“Very well,” said the young man. “With my horse and my hounds I will be able to defeat this giant and this dragon.”

“Master,” said the steed. “Mount on my back, and when we are inside the castle we shall see what we shall see.”

The young man obeyed, and the steed galloped to the Caragine’s castle.

“What a fine horse,” said the Caragine. “I have never seen one so wonderful.”

“You shall have him,” said the young man. “But on one condition. You must ride him first to see how tame he is.”

The Caragine got into the saddle and the steed galloped to the edge of a high cliff. It stopped suddenly and reared up onto its back legs. The Caragine lost his grasp, and fell down into the precipice.

“Now, Master, all we have left is the dragon,” said the steed to the young man. They rode up the steep mountain to the castle surrounded by seven walls. The door in the first wall was so heavy that twenty men could not have forced it. The steed gave it one kick and the door and part of the wall came crashing to the ground. The next door was even heavier, but the steed kicked this down also, and the next, and so on, until they came to the castle courtyard.

Here they found the dragon with three heads. Its tail was several yards long, and its body was covered with scales. It had jaws like a wolf, and when it saw the young man and his horse, it opened its mouths and let forth a terrible roar.

The young man pretended to be afraid and fell at the dragon’s feet.

“Mighty dragon,” he said. “I have been very impudent to enter your lair, and I know that I deserve to die. I do not ask you to spare my life, but please, grant me one last favour.”

“What is it – quickly?” demanded the dragon.

“I wish to give three whistles.”

“Very well – whistle as much as you please.”

The young man put his fingers to his mouth and blew three long whistles. The dogs that the first king had given him heard the sound, and came running through the opened doors into the courtyard. Each one seized hold of one of the dragon’s heads, and soon the monster fell dead to the ground.

Immediately, the air was filled with the happy cries of the people who

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were being kept prisoner in the castle. They poured out of the doors into the courtyard, and at the window of the great tower there appeared a beautiful maiden. It was the King's daughter.

"Young man," she said, "I do not know who you are, or from where you have come, but I know that no other man could have fought so bravely. I will gladly become your wife."

She got up behind him on the saddle, and they rode home to the King's castle. The King was as good as his word, and soon the marriage was celebrated. Everyone was invited to the wedding: the people, the steed and the three dogs. I too was there, and I found it very hard to leave the festivities and come here to tell you of all the wonderful things I saw and heard.

