



The two brothers

Description

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However, the animals were still sleeping on the Dragon Mountain, around their master, who was sleeping the sleep of death.

But about an hour after the marshal had committed the crime and taken the princess away, a large bumblebee came and landed on the hare's nose. The hare, while sleeping, put his paw on his nose and chased away the intruder. But the bumblebee came a second time to land in the same place. Hare, with his paw, still sleeping, chased it away a second time. Then the bumblebee came back a third time, and this third time, he was not satisfied with tickling him with his paws, but stung him with his sting. – Ouïff! said the hare, waking up. Once awake, the hare woke up the fox, the fox woke up the wolf, the wolf woke up the bear, and the bear woke up the lion. But when the lion saw that the princess was gone and that her master had his head separated from his body, he began to roar in a terrible way, shouting:

– Bear, who did this? and why did you not wake me up?

– Wolf, who did this? » asked the bear, « and why didn't you wake me up?

– Fox, who did this? asked the wolf, and why didn't you wake me up?

– Hare, who did it? asked the fox, and why didn't you wake me up?

And, as the hare had no one to question, it was on him that the anger of the other four animals fell. They all wanted to kill him, but he took a supplicating posture and said to them:

– Do not kill me. I know of a small wood, on top of a small hill, in which the root of life grows. Whoever puts this root in his mouth is cured of all illnesses and even of all wounds, and if his body were separated into two parts, just by putting this root in his mouth and bringing the two parts together, they would be joined.

– Where is this wood? » asked the lion.

– Two hundred leagues from here, » replied the hare.

– I'll give you twenty-four hours to go and come back, » said the lion; « so go, and bring back a good piece of root. The hare began to run with all his strength, and after twenty-four hours he was back with a root the length and shape of a beet. The lion said to the bear:

– You who are skillful, adjust the head of our master, while I will hold him upright, and the hare, mounted on the shoulders of the wolf, will introduce the root into his mouth. The four animals set to work with great emotion, for they loved their master with all their hearts; so they were very happy when, the hare having inserted the root of life into Gottlieb's mouth, the head and the body were joined, the heart beat and life was restored.

Only one last fear remained, that the head had not recovered properly. The fox tickled Gottlieb's nose with his tail, Gottlieb sneezed: the head did not move. The operation had thus succeeded.

Then the hunter asked his animals what had become of the princess and what had happened to make them all so preoccupied. The animals told him everything, without hiding their fault, which their devotion, moreover, had just redeemed. Suddenly, the hare gave a cry of terror.

– Clumsy! » he said to the bear, « what have you done?

The bear looked at Gottlieb and almost fell backwards. He had glued his head back on, but in his emotion he had glued it back on upside down, so that the poor hunter's mouth was on his back and his neck on the side of his chest.

Fortunately, the lion had recommended that the hare bring back a good piece of root, and the hare, as we have seen, had followed the recommendation. The bear placed Goliath's sword, which cut like a razor, with its edge in the air. The fox, who was as dexterous as a monkey, fitted the neck on the blade just where it had already been cut. The lion pressed on the head, which came off almost painlessly, and this time, with more care than the first, the head was readjusted, but right side up, and, thanks to the root of life, immediately stuck back on.

But Gottlieb was sad, and often said to the lion with a sigh:

– Why didn't you leave my head and my body separated from each other?

And, indeed, he believed that it was the princess who, in order not to marry him, had had his neck cut off while he was sleeping. So he went around the world, showing off his animals, and everyone came running to see the lion with the emerald necklace, the bear with the diamond earrings, the wolf with the pearl bracelet, and the fox and the hare, one with a ruby ring, the other with a sapphire ring.

A year had just passed, and he was now back in the same town where he had rescued the king's daughter from the seven-headed dragon. Only this time, the whole city was decked out in scarlet.

He then asked his hotelier:

– What does this mean? A year ago your city was covered with black, and today it is covered with red. The innkeeper answered:

– Do you remember that a year ago the king's daughter was to be delivered to the dragon?

– Exactly, said Gottlieb.

– Well, the marshal fought and defeated the monster, and tomorrow they will celebrate his marriage with the king's daughter; that's why a year ago the city was in mourning; that's why today it is in celebration.

The next day, the wedding day, the hunter said to the innkeeper:

– Will you bet, my host, that today I will eat bread from the king's table?

– I'll bet you a hundred gold coins that it won't be, » said the innkeeper.

The hunter made the bet and put down a bag containing the sum bet; then he called the hare and said:

– My good little runner, go quickly and get me some bread that the king eats.

As the hare was the smallest and least important of the troop, he could not entrust the task to anyone else, and had to do it himself.

– Ouch, ouch! » he thought, « when I go running alone through the streets of the city, all the dogs of the districts through which I will pass will come after me.

What he had foreseen happened; after five minutes of running, he had a real pack of dogs of all kinds on his tail, whose visible intention was to cut him down. But he ran and jumped so well that he could hardly be seen passing; finally, pushed to the limit, he ended up slipping into a guardhouse so skillfully that the guard did not notice that he was no longer alone. The dogs wanted to pursue him. But the guard, not knowing to whom all this pack had some, and believing that it was his, distributed to the

dogs strong blows of stick and even some blows of bayonet. The dogs dispersed, howling.

As soon as the hare saw that the passage was free again, he rushed out of the guardhouse, to the great astonishment of the soldier, and, with one jump, arriving at the palace, went straight to the princess, and, slipping under her chair, he gently scratched her foot. The princess thought it was her favorite dog; but, as she was in one of those dispositions of mind where everything bothers you :

– Go away. Phoenix! » she said, « go away!

But the hare scratched again, and the princess said to him again:

– Will you go away, Phoenix! The hare continued to scratch. Then the princess bent down and looked. The hare then showed her the paw where her ring was. The princess recognized the ruby that she had given to the hare of her liberator. She took the hare to her chest and carried it to her room.

– Dear little hare, » she asked him, « what do you want from me?

– My master, who killed the dragon, is here, » he said, « and he sent me to fetch one of the loaves of bread that the king eats. The princess joyfully sent for the baker and ordered him to bring one of the loaves from the king's table.

– But the baker must also bring me back to my master, » said the hare, « so that the dogs don't eat my bread, and me too. The baker took the hare and one of the king's loaves in his apron and carried them to the door of the inn. At the door of the inn, the hare took the bread between his front legs, stood up on his hind legs, and hopped up and carried the bread to his master.

– See, my guest, » said the hunter, « the hundred gold coins are mine. Here is the bread that the king eats, and the proof is that it is in his arms. The innkeeper was astonished, but his astonishment increased when he heard the huntsman say:

– I have the king's bread, that is good, but now I want to have the king's roast.

– Ah, I would like to see that! » said the innkeeper; « but I don't bet anymore. Gottlieb called his fox and said:

– My dear little fox, go and fetch me some of the roast that the king eats. Master Fox was much more clever than his friend the hare; he dashed into an alley, took circuitous routes, and did so well that not a dog saw him. He entered the palace like the hare did, and like the hare did, he stood under the chair of the king's daughter and scratched her foot. She bent down and saw the fox between the sticks of the chair, and his paw where the sapphire ring that the princess had given him was. Immediately the princess took him to her room, where, as soon as she entered, she asked him:

– My dear fox, what do you want from me?

– My master, » answered the fox, « the one who killed the dragon, is here, and has sent me to ask you to give me some of the roast meat that the king is eating.

She sent for the cook, and ordered him to put the fox and a piece of the king's roast in a basket, and to carry both to the door of the inn, which was punctually done. There, the fox took the dish from the cook's hands, swatted away the flies with his tail and brought it to Gottlieb.

– Here, my guest, » said the hunter, « here is the bread and the roast; now I will send for some vegetables from the king's table. Then he called the wolf and said to him:

– My good little wolf, go quickly to the palace, and bring me some vegetables that the king eats. The wolf ran straight to the palace, for he was not afraid of being attacked. He entered the princess's room, and pulling her by her dress, he forced her to turn around. She recognized him by his pearl bracelet, caressed him, and, as she was alone, said to him:

– My dear little wolf, what do you want?

– My master, » answered the wolf, « the one who killed the dragon, has asked you for some vegetables that the king eats. She called the cook again, and ordered him to carry some of the king's vegetables to the door of the inn. The cook set off, followed by the wolf as if he were a dog. At the door of the inn, he gave the dish to the wolf, who brought it to his master.

– See, my dear host, said Gottlieb, here is already bread from the king's table, roast from the king's table, vegetables from the king's table; but my dinner will remain incomplete if I don't have some of the sweets that the king eats. And, calling his bear:

– 'My little bear,' he said to him, 'you who know so much about honey, sweets and cakes, go to the palace and bring me some good delicacy from the king's table. The bear set off at a slow trot, hiding even less than the wolf; for far from being worried by anyone, he frightened everyone away as he passed. Arrived at the door of the palace, the sentry crossed the bayonet in front of him, refusing to let him enter the palace; and, as the bear insisted while growling, the sentry called the post. But the bear stood up on his hind legs and gave so many and so vigorous blows to the right and to the left, that the soldiers of the post rolled about on the ground; whereupon, the bear entered quietly, saw the princess, stood behind her and growled in a very friendly manner. The princess turned around at this growl, which she remembered hearing somewhere before, and recognized the bear by his diamond earrings. She then led him into her room and said:

– My sweet little bear, what do you want from me?

– My master, » said the bear, « the one who killed the dragon, has sent me here, and asks you to give him some of the sweets that the king eats. The princess sent for the confectioner, and ordered him to carry a tray of sweets from the king's table to the door of the hotel. When he got there, the bear began to pick up all the sweets that had fallen to the ground with the tip of his tongue, and then, standing up, took the tray and carried it to his master.

– Ali! ali! Mr. Innkeeper, » said Glottlieb, « here are our sweets coming. So now I have bread, roast, vegetables and dessert from the king's table; now I need some wine from which the king drinks; for I cannot eat all these good things without drinking. So he called his lion and said to him:

– My good little lion, go to the palace and bring me some wine from which the king drinks at his table. The lion immediately set out for the palace, and when he saw him, everyone began to run away, and the shopkeepers closed their stores and all the doors were shut. When the lion appeared in front of the palace, the whole post took up arms and tried to prevent him from entering; but the lion gave a single

roar, and the whole post fled. The princess came to open the door and was at first so frightened at the sight of the lion that she shrank back; but she soon recognized him by the emerald necklace he wore around his neck, which came from her; she let him in and said:

– My dear lion, what do you want?

– My master, » answered the lion, « the one who killed the dragon, has sent me to you to ask you to send him some wine from which the king drinks. The princess immediately sent for the wine steward and told him to go to the cellar and get some of the king's wine and bring it to the inn. The wine steward went down to the cellar; but the lion said:

– Just a moment, friend sommelier, I know your kind, and I will go down to the cellar with you, to see what you will give me. So he followed the wine steward to the cellar, and as the wine steward, thinking he could easily deceive him, wanted to get him some wine that the servants were drinking in the service, the lion said to him:

– I must prove myself worthy of the trust my master has placed in me, and taste the wine before I take it to him. So he drew a half-rocket and swallowed it in one gulp; but shaking his head, he said:

– Ah! ah! » he said, « is this how you wanted to give me some to keep, you fool? Some other wine, and quickly! This one is good for the servants, at most.

The wine steward looked at the lion sideways, but dared not say anything; so he led him to another ton reserved for the king's marshal. But the lion said to him:

– Halt there! I must taste. And he took another half barrel, swallowed it in one gulp, clicked his tongue, and, a little more satisfied, said:

– It is better than the other one, but it is not yet the real one.

At this, the sommelier became angry, and said:

– What can such a stupid animal as you understand about wine?

But he had not finished this sentence, that the lion had sent him a blow of tail and had made him roll to the other end of the cellar.

The wine steward got up and, without breathing a word, led him to a small cellar where the wine was reserved for His Majesty, and from which no other person had ever drunk. The lion, after drinking half a jug of wine to taste it, nodded his head up and down in satisfaction, and said:

– Yes, indeed, this one must be good. He had six bottles filled, and then went back upstairs, followed by the wine steward; but when he was in the courtyard, the fresh air acted on him, and he began to go so badly that the wine steward was obliged to carry the basket to the inn, lest the lion should break the bottles or let them be stolen. There the wine steward put the basket in his mouth, and the lion carried it to his master. Then the hunter said:

– See, Mr. Innkeeper, I have here bread, wine, roast, vegetables, dessert from the king's table.

Pieter Claesz – 1598-1660

So I will dine like a king with my animals. And when he had said this, he sat down at the table, giving the lion, the bear, the wolf, the fox and the hare each his share of the dinner, and he ate well, drank well, and was in a good mood, for he could tell from the promptness with which she had fulfilled his wishes that the princess still loved him. When the meal was over, he said to the innkeeper:

– Mr. Innkeeper, now that I have eaten and drunk of what the king eats and drinks, I want to go to the

palace and marry the king's daughter.

– How can that be? » asked the innkeeper. The princess is already engaged, and the wedding is to take place today. Then the hunter took from his pocket the princess' handkerchief, which contained the seven tongues of the seven heads of the dragon.

– What I have in here, » he said to the innkeeper, « will help me in my project, however crazy it may seem to you. The innkeeper opened his eyes wide and said:

– I believe everything I am told, but as for marrying the king's daughter, I would bet my house and garden that you would not marry her.

The hunter took a bag containing a thousand gold coins and said:

– Here is my stake against your property.

And while this was going on at the inn, the king was sitting at table and said to his daughter:

– What did all these beasts want from you that came to you, entered my palace and left it?

– I cannot say, » replied the princess, « but send for their master, you will do well. The king immediately sent one of his servants to tell the hunter to come to the palace. The servant arrived at the inn just as the hunter had concluded the bet with the innkeeper. Then the hunter said to the innkeeper:

– Here, my dear host, here is already the king sending me one of his servants to invite me to go and see him; but I am not going to see the king so easily. El, turning to the messenger:

– Go back and tell the king, he replied, that he would be pleased to send me gala clothes, a carriage harnessed to six horses, and an escort to do me honor. When this answer was conveyed to the king by the messenger, the king asked his daughter:

– What shall I do?

– She replied, « Do what he asks, and you will do well. Then the king sent the hunter a gala outfit, a

carriage with six horses and an escort. When Gottlieb saw the royal carriage:

– Here, my guest, » he said, « they are coming for me as I wished. And he put on the gala clothes, got into the carriage and went to the palace. When the king saw him coming, he said to his daughter:

– How shall I receive him?

– Go and meet him, father, » said the princess, « you will do well. So the king went to meet the hunter and brought him and his animals into the palace. As there was a great assembly, the king had him placed between him and his daughter, in front of the marshal; but the latter did not recognize him, although he had cut off his head. It was then that the seven heads of the dragon were exposed to the eyes of the guests. The king said:

– These seven heads are the heads of the dragon that the marshal has killed; therefore, today I give him my daughter in marriage. Then the huntsman arose, opened the seven mouths, and said:

– These are the seven heads of the dragon, but where are the seven tongues?

The marshal, who had not noticed the absence of the tongues, because he had never dared to open the dragon's mouths, paled, and answered stammering:

– Dragons have no tongues.

The hunter stared at the marshal and said:

– It is the liars who should not have them; but the dragons have them, and it is the seven tongues of the dragon that are the testimony of the triumph of the victor.

And untying the handkerchief which the princess had given him, he showed the seven tongues; then, taking them one by one, he placed each of them in the mouth to which it belonged, and all these tongues fitted perfectly. Then, shaking the handkerchief, he asked the princess if she remembered giving it to anyone.

– I gave it to the one who killed the dragon, » said the princess. Then the hunter called the lion, and took off his emerald necklace; the bear, and took off his diamond earrings; the wolf, and took off his pearl bracelet; the fox and the hare, and took off their rings. Then, showing all these jewels to the princess :

– Do you know these jewels? » he asked her.

– Certainly, » replied the princess, « since I am the one who divided them among the animals that helped the one who killed the dragon in his fight.

– And who was the one who killed the dragon? » asked Gottlieb at last.

– It was you, » replied the princess.

– But how come you didn't boast about the victory and claim my daughter's hand?

– As I was tired, I lay down and slept, answered Gottlieb, and then the marshal came and cut off my head. Then he dragged the princess away and pretended to be the dragon's victor. But the real victor is me, and I prove it by the tongues, the handkerchief and the jewels.

Then, as some unbelievers were astonished that having had his head cut off by the marshal, he was doing so well, he told how his animals had resurrected him, how he had traveled the world for a year with them, and how finally he had returned to the capital of the kingdom, where he had learned from his host the trickery of the marshal. Then the king asked his daughter:

– Is it true that it was this young man who killed the dragon?

– Yes, it is true, » she answered. I had sworn, so I had to keep silent; but, today that, without my participation, the infamy of the marshal is known, I can speak. Yes, » she added, pointing to Gottlieb, « yes, here is the winner of the dragon, and it is indeed to him that I gave my handkerchief, and it is indeed to his animals that I gave my jewels.

MAROT François (1666 – 1719)

That is why I had asked for a year and a day before marrying the marshal, hoping that, in the space of a year and a day, the light would be made.

Then the king assembled a council composed of twelve councillors, to judge the marshal, who was condemned to be quartered by four oxen. The judgment was carried out, to the great satisfaction of the king's subjects, who hated the marshal. The king gave his daughter in marriage to the hunter, and appointed him governor general of the whole kingdom. The wedding was celebrated with great magnificence, and the young governor brought his father and foster father to him.

He did not forget the innkeeper either, and having called him to the court, he said to him:

– Well, my host, behold, I have married the king's daughter, and therefore your garden and your house belong to me.

– Yes, » said the innkeeper, « that is according to justice.

– No, » said the young governor, « it will be according to mercy. Keep your house and your garden, and, on top of that, take the thousand gold coins.

Perhaps you think, my dear little children, that my story ends like this; think again. Later on, you will learn a very sad truth: it is that, when one thinks one is touching the supreme happiness, one is often close to falling into the most cruel misfortune.

To be continued...

date créée

03/02/2023

Auteur

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