



The two brothers – Chapter II

Description

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Gottlieb soon arrived, with his lion, bear, wolf, fox, and leopard, in a large city that was all tended in black. He asked the first man to show him an inn, and the first man told him the inn of the Stag's Horn, which was a very bad name, my dear children, because it is not called a stag's horn, but a stag's antler. So he went to the Stag's Horn, took a room for himself and a stable for his animals, who were used to living in good friendship with each other, and usually slept on the same straw, as if they were all of the same species.

The innkeeper gave him a good room for himself, but all he had left for his animals was a stable with a hole in the wall. The hare was the first to go in. As he had the most agile legs, he was the one who was usually sent as a scout. It is true that, as he was very shy, he often had panic attacks and reported the most absurd news. In this case, the fox was sent, who was full of cunning and finesse, and it was rare, when he returned, that one did not know exactly what there was really to fear or to hope for.



JJ Granville

This time, the hare simply went to the grocery store, and brought back a cabbage. The fox went in turn, and brought back a hen. The wolf, making himself small, followed the fox and brought back a lamb. But the bear and the lion could not get through, and the innkeeper gave them an old cow with which they could eat for three days.

When Gottlieb had taken care of his animals, which was always his first concern, he asked the innkeeper why the town was covered in black.

– Because tomorrow, » said the innkeeper, « the daughter of our king is to die.

– Is she that sick? » asked the young man.

– No, » replied the innkeeper, « on the contrary, she is young, fresh and healthy; she must die, and a very cruel death. And the innkeeper sighed heavily.

– How, then, is it possible? » asked Gottlieb.

– Up there on the mountain, » answered the innkeeper, « there is a seven-headed dragon, who every year devours a young virgin; otherwise he would devastate the country. And now he has eaten all the virgins; only the king's daughter is left, and as there is no mercy to be expected from the dragon, tomorrow the king's daughter will be exposed, and the day after tomorrow she will be dead.

– But, » asked the hunter, « why don't we kill the dragon?

– Alas! » said the innkeeper, « many knights have already tried it, and they paid for it with their lives.

– That's fine, » said Gottlieb, « let me think for a moment about what you have just told me. Gottlieb went down into the stable, assembled his council of beasts, and sat down, as president, on a stepladder.

When he had explained the situation, the lion roared, the bear growled, the wolf howled, the fox pondered, the hare trembled.

The lion said:

– We must attack him and tear him to pieces.

The bear said:

– We must attack him and smother him.

The wolf says:

– What others will do, I will do.

The fox said:

– There must be a way to defeat him without risking his skin, though.

The hare said:

– My opinion is that we must flee and the sooner the better. The hunter said to the fox:

– I am of your opinion; go out and find out.

The fox went out; two hours later, he returned. He had discussed the event with the oldest fox in the area.

The old fox told him:

– I cannot tell your master how to defeat the dragon, but halfway up the mountain there is a little

chapel dedicated to St. Hubert, patron saint of hunters. Let your master go there tonight to pray and spend the night; perhaps Saint Hubert, seeing this devotion, will inspire him with some good ideas. Gottlieb thanked the fox and decided to follow the advice of his old friend. That evening, without saying anything about his intentions, he took his animals out of the stable and walked with them to the chapel. Once there, he knelt down and prayed to the saint, while the animals stood respectfully on their hind legs. After praying, he lay down in a corner and fell asleep.

Then Saint Hubert appeared to him. He was resplendent with light.

– Tomorrow, when you wake up, » the saint said to him, « you will find on my altar three crystal cups: one filled with wine as red as ruby, another with wine as yellow as topaz, and the third with white wine as clear as diamond. Whoever empties these three bowls will become the strongest man on earth, and will then be able to lift the stone that is under the porch of the chapel, and take the sword of Goliath, which is buried there. To this sword alone is reserved to cut off the seven heads of the dragon. At daybreak, Gottlieb woke up. His dream was so present in his mind that when he opened his eyes he turned his head towards the altar. On the altar, where the day before he had seen nothing, he saw the three cups. He went to the altar, took the three bowls one by one and emptied them. Then, as he emptied the bowls, it seemed to him that the strength of all the men of creation entered him, that, like Hercules, he could fight with the lion of Nemea, and that, like Samson, he would kill a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

Immediately he went to the porch and recognized the stone under which the sword was buried. He called the bear and the lion.

– He said to them, « Lift up this stone.

The bear and the lion set to work, but they could not even shake it.

Then Gottlieb said:

– It is my turn.

And passing his fingers under the stone, he lifted it. Under the stone was a sword four cubits long, not counting the handle, and weighing over five hundred pounds. Gottlieb took it and reeled with it as easily as he would have done with a harlequin bat. From then on, he had no doubt that he would win, since he had St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunters, for him, and he boldly climbed to the top of the mountain.

However, the time had come to deliver the princess; the king accompanied her, with the marshal and the courtiers, to the foot of the mountain. The princess continued her road with the marshal until the chapel; there, the marshal was to remain to attend the sacrifice, and to come to give account to the king. The princess continued her way to the top, going very reluctantly and crying her eyes out. When she reached the top of the mountain, she was very frightened, for she thought that the hunter and his five animals were nothing other than the dragon that was to devour her. But the hunter, on the contrary, came respectfully in front of her, followed by his lion, his bear, his wolf, his fox and his hare, to whom he had recommended to make the most pleasant appearance possible.

He greeted her and said:

– Beautiful princess, do not fear anything from me or from the animals that follow me; far from wanting to harm you, we have come to fight the dragon and deliver you.

– Beautiful hunter, said the princess, God help you, but I do not have much hope; many have already tried what you are going to try, and all have lost their lives.

– Well, said the young hunter still encouraged by the marvellous beauty of the princess, either I will deliver you, or I will lose my life like them; so that I will not have the pain to see perishing the most beautiful princess of the earth.

At this moment, one heard in the air like a storm: it was the beating of the wings of the dragon; then the day darkened under a cloud of smoke, which was nothing other than the breath of the monster.

– Go and stand under that oak tree, princess, » said Gottlieb, « and from there pray to God for your devoted servant.

The princess, trembling, went to stand under the oak tree: the hare followed her. The other four animals, the lion, the bear, the wolf and the fox, stayed with their master. In the meantime, the seven-headed dragon had lowered himself little by little, and was only twenty-five or thirty cubits from the ground. The hunter was waiting for him, with Goliath's sword in his hand.

When the dragon saw Gottlieb, he said to him:

– What are you doing on this mountain? I mean you no harm; go away!

But Gottlieb answered him:

– If you do not wish me any harm, I have sworn your death, and I have come to fight you; therefore defend yourself.

– I never defend myself, said the dragon: I attack.

And, at these words, he rose up into the sky, to the point that he seemed no bigger than a swallow, and, throwing flames from his seven mouths, he let himself fall, as fast as lightning, on the hunter, believing to take him in his claws and to snatch him up in the air like a kite snatches a passer-by. But Gottlieb threw himself aside, and, with the back of his sword, he cut off one of his paws.

The dragon gave a cry of pain, went up in the air, fell again, but without more success: with his second blow, Gottlieb knocked off the second leg. Three more times the dragon tried the same maneuver, and each time he lost two heads. Finally, he became so weak that, unable to fly, he crawled; but, deprived of the help of his legs, he could not guarantee himself from the attack of Gottlieb, who, with two blows of his sword, cut off his tail and his remaining head. Then, he shouted hallalus and delivered the dragon's corpse to his beasts to make a feast. They tore the dragon to pieces, except for the hare, which did not dare to approach the dead animal any more than the living one.



Warwick Goble (1862 – 1943)

The fight over, the hunter went to the beautiful princess, whom he found lying unconscious under the oak tree. She had fainted with terror. The hare was close to her, his eyes closed, and if it were not for the convulsive trembling that shook his whole body, one would have thought he was dead. Gottlieb went to a stream that flowed nearby, took water from a large leaf of nymphlea, and returned to throw it on the face of the princess. The coolness of the sprinkling made the princess come to.

The hunter showed her the dead dragon and said:

– You have nothing more to fear, princess, you are delivered.

The princess began by thanking God, who had given her liberator strength and courage; then, returning to Gottlieb, she said to him:

– Now, beautiful hunter, you are going to be my beloved husband; for my father promised me for a wife to the one who would kill the dragon. And as a reward for the animals, she undid her necklace of emeralds, which she fastened around the neck of the lion, her earrings of diamonds, which she put on the ears of the bear, her bracelet of pearls, which she put on the leg of the wolf, and two rings of great price, one of sapphire, the other of ruby, which she gave to the fox and the hare. As for the hunter, she gave him her pocket handkerchief, still soaked with her tears, and on the four corners of which was her number embroidered in gold. The hunter cut the seven tongues of the dragon and put them in the handkerchief. This operation finished, as he was tired of the fight, he said to the young princess, not less broken by fear than he was by fatigue:

– Princess, we are both so exhausted that we should sleep for a few moments in order to gain the strength to go back down to the city.

She answered:

– Yes, my dear hunter. And they both lay down on the ground side by side.

Only, before falling asleep, the hunter said to the lion:

– Lion, you will see to it that no one attacks us while we sleep. Do you hear?

– Yes, » said the lion.

The princess was already asleep. The hunter fell asleep in turn. The lion lay down next to them, but, as he was very tired, he said to the bear:

– Bear, do me the pleasure of keeping watch in my place. I am so tired that I need to sleep a little. But if there is any danger, wake me up. The bear lay down next to the lion. But he was so exhausted from the fight that he called the wolf and said:

– Wolf, thou seest that I have not strength to keep my eyes open; if any thing happen, wake me up. The wolf lay down beside the bear, but his eyes closed in spite of himself, so he beckoned the fox to come closer.

– Fox, » he said, « I am dying of sleep; keep watch in my place, and wake me up at the slightest noise. But the fox felt that he could not do this good watch which was recommended to him, so great was his fatigue. So he called the hare and said to him:

– Hare, you who never sleep with one eye open, please keep watch for me, and if you see anything that worries you, wake me up. But the poor hare had experienced such anguish that he was actually the most tired of all. So the recommendation was no sooner made to him than he was sleeping as soundly as all the others. So the hunter, the king's daughter, the lion, the bear, the wolf, the fox and the hare were all fast asleep, with no one to watch over them.

So the marshal, who had remained in the chapel to observe, not seeing the dragon snatching the king's daughter from the air, and noticing that all was quiet on the mountain, took courage and went

forward step by step, his eye on the lookout, pricking up his ears and ready to flee at the least danger.

The first thing he saw when he reached the top was the dragon torn to pieces. Then his gaze moved on. He saw the king's daughter, the hunter and his animals, all in a deep sleep, and, as the marshal was a man full of envy and ambition, it occurred to him at that moment to pretend to be the dragon's conqueror and to marry the king's daughter.

But to do this, he first had to get rid of the real winner. So he drew his sword, approached Gottlieb so gently that he did not arouse any of the animals, not even the hare, and, drawing his sword, he cut off Gottlieb's head with one blow.

Then he woke up the princess, who was very frightened; but the marshal said to her:

– You are in my hands, and I will cut off your head as I did the hunter's, if you do not swear to me that you will say that it was I who killed the dragon.

– I cannot commit such a big lie, said the princess, because it is really the hunter who killed the monster, and his animals who finished him off.

– But you will do as I wish, » said the marshal, twirling his bloody sword around the princess's head, « or I will cut you to pieces and say that it was the dragon who arranged you like this.

The princess was so frightened that she swore whatever the marshal wanted.

Having thus obtained this oath, he led her to the king, who thought he would die of joy at seeing his dear daughter again, whom he had thought lost. The marshal said to the king.

– I am the one who killed the dragon and delivered not only the princess, but the empire; I therefore ask that she be my wife, as the promise was made on your sacred word. The king turned to his daughter, and, as the marshal was not considered a brave man:

– Is it true what the marshal says?

– Alas! yes. answered she, it is necessary that that is true; only, I hold that the marriage takes place only in one year and one day. The marshal insisted that the marriage should take place at once; but the princess remained firm in her desire, and, as the marshal feared that by brutalizing her he would push her to say everything in a moment of despair, he had to go through this delay. As for the princess, although she had seen the head of her beautiful hunter separated from the body, she hoped that God, who had already worked a miracle for her, would perhaps deign to work a second one.

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