

LAZARUS AND THE DRAGONS

A Tale from Greece

Lazarus was a cobbler who was plagued by flies while he worked. He became so frustrated that he grabbed a strip of leather and swiftly swatted it around his head. When he stopped, forty of those pesky flies had been killed.

Lazarus was so proud of himself he carved this saying into a wooden sword: I SLEW FORTY WITH ONE BLOW. He took the sword with him as he left home to seek adventure.

A few days into his journey, Lazarus lay down next to a spring where he took a nap. Close by lived a number of dragons who daily drank from the spring. One dragon came upon Lazarus as he lay sleeping. The dragon read his sword and ran back to the other dragons to tell them what he saw.

Wanting to keep themselves on the good side of Lazarus, the dragons asked him to join their group. Lazarus agreed, not knowing that he was expected to do his share of the work while living amongst his new clan. When it came time for Lazarus to bring water back from the spring, he knew he

couldn't carry enough water by himself. So, he started to dig a ditch from the spring to the cave. In this way the water wouldn't have to be carried anymore. The dragons thought that diverting the spring water might make it dry up so they told him to stop working. They also agreed to do Lazarus' share of carrying the water.

When it was Lazarus' turn to gather fire wood he knew he couldn't carry back a large branch much less a whole tree. That was the amount needed to feed a big enough fire for the dragons. Lazarus came up with a plan. He began roping off the entire forest. When the dragons found out what he was up to, they became worried. They thought that if the entire forest got rooted up they would run out of fire wood; so they agreed to do Lazarus' share of the wood gathering.

It wasn't long before the dragons got tired of doing Lazarus' share of the work, so they plotted to kill him in his sleep. Lazarus heard the dragons talking about the plan, so he put a log in his bed; this way when the dragons came to kill him with their axes, all they really did was chip away at the log. When the dragons left his room, Lazarus returned to his bed. In the morning he came out of his room complaining about the fleas that kept him up in the night with their pinching.

The dragons became a bit frightened by Lazarus. They decided to try bribing him into leaving. They offered Lazarus

a bag of gold and reminded him that he had a family that surely missed him. Lazarus agreed to leave the dragon clan but asked if one would accompany him home to carry his gold. The dragons agreed to this plan.

When Lazarus and his dragon companion got close to Lazarus' home, Lazarus asked the dragon to wait while he went home to tie up his children. He said that if he did not do this, his kids would surely eat the dragon. While the dragon waited, Lazarus told his children about the plan. They let their father tie them up. Then when the dragon came into the yard, the children shouted their excitement at the prospect of eating dragon meat. As soon as he heard this, the dragon dropped the bag of gold and ran back home in fright as quickly as he could.

Although the children did not get to eat dragon meat, they were able to live out the rest of their days in comfort, never wanting for anything; thanks to the dragon gold.

*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the tale "Lazarus and the Dragons" found in The Whole World Storybook, by Marcus Crouch. Illustrated by William Stobbs. Oxford University Press, c1983, pp. 1- 6.

