Harry the Hiccup and the Three Tests of Worth

by Amelia Rose Evans

Once, in a country far, far away, there lived three brothers.

The eldest, James, while handsome, was also treacherous, but he was so sly he made everyone think he was the most gallant man alive; hence he was called "James the Gallant."

The second brother, George, was strong and muscular. However, he was also a proud man who wasn't very strong at heart. Nevertheless, as man looks not on the heart but the appearance, he was called "George the Strong."

The youngest, Harry, was nothing like his brothers. He was hardly more than a boy, and was short and skinny and without much glamor. However, he was as honest, clever, and brave as a hero of the sagas of old.

James and George, though, failed to notice their brother's gallant qualities. Instead, they called him Harry the Hiccup, saying that his mere existence was a mistake and no more.

In a neighboring country to the one in which the brothers lived, there dwelt a Barbarian Princess, who was as fierce as she was fair. (Being exceptionally fierce, it followed that she was also exceptionally fair.) Many a suitor had gone to claim her hand in marriage, and all had died horrible deaths, for the princess would only have a man who could pass three tests.

The three brothers traveled to meet this princess, and upon seeing her beauty, they decided at once to try the tests. When the princess saw James and George, she simply laughed, saying that if these were who would attempt this task, she would remain unmarried forever. However, she said nothing when she saw Harry. She only gazed at him with her fierce, fair eyes. If one looked closely, one might even think there was a vague smile on her lips.

The brothers traveled together soon found three dogs. James the Gallant chose the most majestic, and George the Strong chose the largest. However, Harry the Hiccup chose the runt of the litter, a sturdy little fellow who feared nothing.

They traveled on and came upon three shields. James the Gallant chose the most bejeweled and George the Strong chose the biggest one. However, Harry the Hiccup chose a plain, slightly bent, but strong shield.

The brothers traveled still on and soon came upon three swords. James the Gallant chose the most magnificent and George the Strong chose the biggest. However, Harry the Hiccup chose a small, plain little blade that was undoubtedly a bit rusty, but felt tried and true.

As the tests seemed complete, the brothers began their journey back. James the Gallant and George the Strong mocked their youngest brother for his small dog,

his bent shield, and most of all his rusty sword. “You shall never please the Barbarian Princess with those!” they laughed.

Just as they reached the castle of the Barbarian Princess, a huge, terrifying, hungry dragon stepped forth. James the Gallant and George the Strong sent their dogs to attack it. However, both dogs quailed at the sight of the beast and fled with their tails between their legs.

When Harry the Hiccup sent his little dog at the dragon, he charged at it without fear, wounding its limbs and tail. However, the dragon still came on, and he let out a burst of flame.

James the Gallant and George the Strong put up their shields, but they were not strong, and both men were scorched by the fire.

When Harry the Hiccup put up his shield, however, it proved sturdy and strong, and he was untouched by the flames.

The dragon, angry from his wound, and hungrier than ever, rushed forward to devour the brothers. All three brothers rushed at it with their swords. The swords of James the Gallant and George the Strong broke upon contact with the dragon’s hard scales. Only Harry the Hiccup’s rusty sword held firm, and with it Harry slew the beast.

The Barbarian Princess had watched all this through her window, and came running out to meet the brothers. She took Harry the Hiccup’s hand.

“You are not only more gallant and strong than your brothers,” she said, “but also wiser. You have proved yourself worthy of me, and with my fierceness and your cleverness and wisdom we shall rule the Barbarian Kingdom well. You were the only one who made no mistake. Thus from now on you shall be called, ‘Harry the Hero.’”

And so Harry the Hero married the Barbarian Princess, and because he was as kind as he was brave, he provided his now repentant brothers with jobs in the castle. Harry and the Princess ruled the Barbarian Kingdom well, always keeping in mind that the best is not always the most obvious.

The End