

## The Three Brothers and the Golden Apple

Once upon a time, there was a woman who had three sons. A wonderfully beautiful apple tree grew in their garden. Each year it only spawned one apple, but it was nothing but pure gold. But every year in the night when the apple was ready, a giant dragon would tear off the golden apple and take it.

One year the oldest son said to his mother:

"Mother, I will protect the apple and bring it to our house this time!"

Unfortunately, he fell asleep and missed his chance to kill the dragon and save the apple. Next year, the same thing happened to the second son.

But when it was the third's son turn to try and keep the apple safe, he managed to stay awake and saw the dragon coming from a big thunderstorm. The young man got his knife and when the dragon arrived, a struggle of life and death began, the earth trembling. The lad fought fiercely, but he could not kill it. Finally, he struck it with his knife, the dragon burst out of pain, flapped its wings and disappeared into the clouds. The youngest son cut off the golden apple and took it to his mother.

Then he and his brothers went looking for the dragon. The traces of blood led to a hole so dark and deep that the bottom was not visible. He went down and left his brothers upstairs, so they can pull him out after killing the dragon. In the underworld he saw a garden with three beautiful girls - two playing with golden apples and one - with an ordinary one. He went inside, killed the dragon, saved the girls and took them to the hole where his brother were supposed to bring them up to the ground. They pulled up the first two girls, but when it came to the third one, he said to her:

"My brothers will start fighting over you, and they won't pull me up. But I will find a way to reach you and then I will marry you!"

The girl smiled and gave him her ring: "Take this" she said, "it is a magic ring, it makes wishes come true." He took the ring and made his brothers bring her up. They started fighting over who should marry her, as she was the most beautiful girl they had ever seen, and completely forgot about their youngest brother. For three days and nights, he struggled to find his way out but finally managed to reach the surface with the help of a giant eagle. When he reached his home, he saw his brother fighting over the youngest maiden. When she saw him, she said: "Whoever brings me the most beautiful dress, I will marry him!" The young lad remembered the ring and wished the most extraordinary gown for the girl. It appeared bright and breathtaking, in colours that no one had ever seen before.

She went to him and said: "I will marry you because you are the bravest man I have ever seen, but there is something else - my father was the ruler of this lands, so now they are all yours!"

Years later they were all gone, but the golden apple tree was still growing, giving just one golden apple each year.”