



Little Rolling-Pea

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Russian

Easy

12 min read

In a certain empire and a certain province, on the ocean sea, on the island of Bujan, stood a green oak, and under the oak a roasted ox, and by its side a whetted knife; suddenly the knife was seized. Be so good as to eat! This isn't a story (*kazka*), but only a preface to a story (*prikazka*): whoever shall listen to my story, may he have a sable-skin cloak, and a horse-skin cloak, and a very beautiful damsel, a hundred roubles for the wedding, and fifty for a jollification!

There was a husband and wife. The wife went for water, took a bucket, and after drawing water, went home, and all at once she saw a pea rolling along. She thought to herself: 'This is the gift of God.' She took it up and ate it, and in course of time became the mother of a baby boy, who grew not by years, but by hours, like millet dough when leavened. They nursed and petted him in a way that couldn't be improved upon, and put him to school. What others learnt in three or four years he understood in a single year, and the book was not sufficient for him. He came from the school to his father and mother: 'Now, then, daddy and mammy, thank my teachers, for already many come to school to me. Thank God, I know more than they.'

Well, he went into the street to amuse himself, and found a pin, which he brought to his father and mother. He said to his father: 'Here's this piece of iron; take it to a smith, and let him make me a mace of seven poods weight.' His father didn't say a single word to him, but only thought in his own mind: 'The Lord has given me a

child different from other people; I think he has a middling understanding, but he is now making a fool of me. Can it possibly be that a seven-pood mace can be made out of a pin?' His father, having a considerable sum of money in gold, silver, and paper, drove to the town, bought seven poods of iron, and gave them to a smith to make a mace of. They made him a seven-pood mace, and he brought it home. Little Rolling-pea came out from the attic, took his seven-pood mace, and, hearing a storm in the sky, threw it into the clouds.

He went up into his attic: 'Mother, look in my head before I start a nasty thing is biting me, for I am a young lad.' . . . Well, rising from his mother's knees, he went out into the yard and saw the clouds. He fell down with his right ear to the broad ground, and on rising up called his father: 'Father, come here: see what is whizzing and humming; my mace is coming to the ground.' He placed his knee in the way of his mace; the mace struck him on the knee and broke in halves. He became angry with his father: 'Well, father, why did you not have a mace made for me out of the iron that I gave you? If you had done so, it would not have broken, but only bent. Here is the same iron for you, go and get it made; don't add any of your own.' The smiths put the iron in the fire and began to beat it with hammers and pull it, and made a seven-pood mace.

Little Rolling-pea took his seven-pood mace and got ready to go on a journey, a long journey; he went and went, and Overturn-hill met him. 'I salute you, brother Little Rolling-pea! whither are you going? whither are you journeying?' Little Rolling-pea also asked him a question: 'Who are you?' 'I am the mighty hero Overturn-hill.' 'Will you be my comrade?' said Little Rolling-pea. He replied: 'Possibly I will be at your service.' They went on together. They went and went, and the mighty hero Overturn-oak met them. 'God bless you, brothers! Good health to you! What manner of men are you?' inquired Overturn-oak. 'Little Rolling-pea and Overturn-hill.' 'Whither are you going?' 'To such a city. A dragon devours people there, so we are going to smite him.' 'Is it not possible for me to join your company?' 'It is possible,' said Little Rolling-pea. They went to the city, and made themselves known to the emperor. 'What manner of men are you?' 'We are mighty heroes!' 'Is it in your power to deliver this city? A dragon is ravenous and destroys much people. He must be slain.' 'Why do we call ourselves mighty heroes, if we do not slay him?' Midnight came, and they went up to a bridge of guelder-rose-wood over a river of fire.

Lo! up came a six-headed dragon, and posted himself upon the bridge, and immediately his horse neighed, his falcon chattered, and his hound howled. He gave his horse a blow on the head: 'Don't neigh, devil's carrion! Don't chatter, falcon! And you, hound, don't howl! For here is Little Rolling-pea. Well now,' said he, 'come

forth, Little Rolling-pea! shall we fight or shall we try our strength?' Little Rolling pea answered: 'Not to try their strength do good youths travel, but only to fight.' They began the combat. Little Rolling-pea and his comrades struck the dragon three blows at a time on three heads.

The dragon, seeing that he could not escape destruction, said: 'Well, brothers, it is only little Rolling-pea that troubles me. I'd settle matters with you two.' They began to fight again, smashed the dragon's remaining heads, took the dragon's horse to the stable, his falcon to the mews, and his hound to the kennel; and Little Rolling pea cut out the tongues from all six heads, took and placed them in his knapsack, and the headless trunk they cast into the river of fire. They came to the emperor, and brought him the tongues as certain proof. The emperor thanked them. 'I see that you are mighty heroes and deliverers of the city, and all the people. If you wish to drink and eat, take all manner of beverages and eatables without money and without tax.' And from joy he issued a proclamation throughout the whole town, that all the eating-houses, inns, and small public-houses were to be open for the mighty heroes. Well, they went everywhere, drank, amused themselves, refreshed themselves, and enjoyed various honours.

Night came, and exactly at midnight they went under the guelder-rose bridge to the river of fire, and speedily up came a seven-headed dragon. Immediately his horse neighed, his falcon chattered, and his hound howled. The dragon immediately struck his horse on the head. 'Neigh not, devil's carrion! chatter not, falcon! howl not, hound! for here is Little Rolling-pea. Now then,' said he, 'come forth, Little Rolling-pea! Shall we fight or try our strength?' 'Good youths travel not to try their strength, but only to fight.' And they began the combat, and the heroes beat off six of the dragon's heads; the seventh remained. The dragon said: 'Give me breathing time!' But Little Rolling-pea said: 'Don't expect me to give you breathing time.' They began the combat again. He beat off the last head also, cut out the tongues, and placed them in his knapsack, but threw the trunk into the river of fire. They came to the emperor, and brought the tongues for certain proof.

The third time they went at midnight to the bridge of guelder-rose and the river of fire; speedily up came to them a nine-headed dragon. Immediately his horse neighed, his falcon chattered, and his hound howled. The dragon struck his horse on the head. 'Neigh not, devil's carrion! falcon, chatter not! hound, howl not! for here is Little Rolling-pea. And now come forth, Little Rolling-pea! Shall we fight or try our strength?' Little Rolling-pea said: 'Not to try their strength do good youths travel, but only to fight.' They began the combat, and the heroes beat off eight heads; the ninth remained.

Little Rolling-pea said: 'Give us breathing time, unclean power!' It answered: 'Take breathing time or not, you will not overcome me; you slew my brothers by craft, not by strength.' Little Rolling-pea not only fought, but thought how to delude the dragon. All at once he thought of a plan, and said: 'Yes, there's still much of your brother behind—I'll take you all.' Hastily the dragon looked round, and he cut off the ninth head also, cut out the tongues, put them into his knapsack, and threw the trunk into the river of fire. They went to the emperor. The emperor said: 'I thank you, mighty heroes! live with God, and with joy and courage, and take as much gold, silver, and paper money as you want.'

After this the wives of the three dragons met together and took counsel together. 'Whence did those men come who slew our husbands? Well, we shall be women if we don't get rid of them out of the world.' The youngest said: 'Now then, sisters! let us go by the highroad, where they will go. I will make myself into a very beautiful wayside seat, and if, when wearied, they sit down upon it, it will be death to them all.' The second said to her: 'If you do nothing to them, I will make myself into an apple-tree beside the high-road, and when they begin to come up to me, the agreeable odour will attract them; and if they taste the apples, it will be death to them all.' Well, the heroes came up to the beautiful wayside seat. Little Rolling-pea thrust his sword into it up to the hilt—blood poured forth! They went on to the apple-tree. 'Brother Little Rolling-pea,' said the heroes, 'let us each eat an apple.' But he said: 'If it is possible, let us eat; if it is not possible, let us go on further.'

He drew his sword and thrust it into the apple-tree up to the hilt, and blood poured forth immediately. The third she-dragon hastened after them, and extended her jaws from the earth to the sky. Little Rolling-pea saw that there was not room for them to pass by. How were they to save themselves? He looked about and saw that she specially aimed at him, and threw the three horses into her mouth. The she-dragon flew off to the blue sea to drink water, and they proceeded further. She pursued them again. He saw that she was near, and threw the

three falcons into her mouth. Again the she-dragon flew to the blue sea to drink water, and they proceeded further.

Little Rolling-pea looked round; the she-dragon was again pursuing him, and seeing his danger, he took and threw the three hounds into her mouth. Again she flew off to the blue sea to drink water; while she drank her fill, they proceeded still further. He looked round and saw that she was catching them up again. Little Rolling-pea took his two comrades and threw them into her, mouth. The she-dragon flew to the blue sea to drink water, and he went on. Again she overtook him; he looked round, saw that she was not far off, and said: 'Lord, protect me and save my soul!' He saw before him an iron workshop, and fled into the smithy. The smith said to him: 'Why, stranger, are you so cowardly?' 'Honourable gentlemen! protect me from an unclean power, and save my soul!'

They took and shut the smithy completely up. 'Give up to me what is mine!' said the she-dragon. Then the smiths said to her: 'Lick the iron door through, and we will place him on your tongue.' She licked the door through, and placed her tongue in the centre. The smiths seized her tongue three at a time with red-hot pincers, and said: 'Come, stranger, do with her what you will!' He went out into the yard, and began to pound the she-dragon, and pounded her skin to the bones, and her bones to the marrow; then took her with her whole carcass and buried her seven fathoms deep. Then, and not till then, did he live and eat morsels; but we ate bread, for he had none. I was there, too, and drank honey-wine; it flowed over my beard, but didn't get into my mouth.

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