



THE DOG AND THE DRAGON



WORDS BY
**BRANDON
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ART BY
**HOWARD
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For Isaac Stewart,
Who paints my imagination.
—B. S.

For Shari, Isabel, Isaac, and Alex,
and all the bedtime stories we created together.
Let the wild rumpus continue!
Love, Dad
—H. L.

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Once there was a dog.

He wasn't a large dog. Actually, other dogs often mocked him for being so small.

He wasn't a distinctive dog either. He was white, with brown spots and floppy ears. Boring enough that, again, the other dogs often laughed at him.

Of no distinctive breed, he was a common variety of a common species of a common animal that most people would rightfully ignore.



A painting of two dogs on a grassy hill. The dog on the left is white with a large brown patch on its back and is looking down. The dog on the right is also white with a brown patch and is looking up. The sky is filled with large, billowing clouds in shades of blue and white. The foreground is a lush green hill with various colorful flowers like blue, purple, and yellow. The overall style is soft and painterly.

This all bothered the dog.

Often, he would go wandering the hills outside the farm, thinking about how to earn the respect of the other dogs.

One day, while doing so, he saw something.



A small, white and brown dog with a blue collar stands on a grassy hill, looking up at a large, purple dragon's wing that fills the right side of the frame. The sky is a vibrant mix of blue, yellow, and purple, with several small birds flying in the distance. The scene is set in a lush, green landscape with colorful flowers in the foreground and a line of trees in the background.

A dragon.





The dog marveled, as one might expect.

He had never seen anything so
majestic or **grand**.

The dragon soared in the sky,
shimmering with iridescent
colors in the sunlight.

When the dragon curved around and passed above
the dog, it called out with a **mighty voice**.

TREMBLE
AND FEAR ME!
FOR I AM THE KING
OF THE SKIES!





The dog stared in awe, amazed. This was the
answer. This was how to gain respect.

He was going to become a **dragon**.



The dog returned to the farm, where many dogs lived with a family.

The Farmer, who was aging but worked hard.

The Farmer's Wife, who was tall and practical.

The Boy, lanky and prone to daydreams.

The Girl, solemn, and tall like her mother.

And the Baby.

On the farm, everyone had jobs except the baby. Even all the other dogs had jobs, chasing livestock or guarding the perimeter. But our dog—as the smallest—was never given any duty.



After much thought, the dog decided on three steps to become a dragon.

First, he would give himself colorful scales like the dragon.

Second, he would learn to speak the language of men like the dragon had.

Third, he would learn to FLY like the dragon.





But how would he get scales? Well, he knew the farmer owned many seeds in a variety of colors, and they were the shape of little scales. Perhaps something like those would work?

The dog determined to make seeds of his own. He borrowed some seeds and went out to accompany the farmer's son for the spring. As the youth planted, the dog moved alongside him, digging holes for seeds with his paws and planting them carefully with his mouth.

The farmer's son found the dog's actions quite amusing. The dog went out each day, gripping a watering can in his teeth. He learned to weed and fertilize. Eventually the dog was rewarded with his own small crop of colorful seeds.





After replacing the seeds he'd borrowed from the farmer, the dog got himself wet and rolled in his crop, sticking them all over his body. He then presented himself to the other dogs.



“Do you admire my wonderful new scales?” he asked his fellow animals. “Do I not look like a dragon?”





They, in turn, laughed at him. “Those are not scales!” they said. “You look stupid and silly. Go back to being a dog.”

The dog slunk away, feeling foolish and hurt.
He had failed at his first task, to have scales
like a dragon.



But surely if he could speak with the grand voice of a dragon, they would all see. He just had to figure out how to talk in the human way.

And so, the dog spent his free time watching the farmer's three children. In particular, the baby who toddled around the yard, tended by the family as they did their chores. The baby was learning to speak too. So the dog played with her and listened.





Unfortunately, he found that he couldn't form words.
He tried **SO HARD** to speak as they did, but his
mouth could not make human speech.



He was discouraged until, one day, he noticed the farmer's elder daughter practicing something. She was learning to make **WORDS** on **PAPER**. The dog was overjoyed! It was a way to speak without having a human tongue!



The dog joined her at the table where she studied, inspecting the letters as she made them. He failed many times, but eventually learned to scratch the letters in the dirt himself.



The dog was sure he had found a way to prove he was becoming a dragon. He returned to the other dogs in the field and showed them his new ability by writing their names in the dirt.





They, however, could not read the words. When the dog explained what writing was, they laughed. “This is not the loud and majestic voice of a dragon!” the dogs said. “This is speaking so quietly, nobody can hear it! You look silly and stupid. Go back to being a dog.”

They left the dog to stare at his writing as rain began to fall, washing the words away. He realized they were correct. He had failed to speak with the proud and powerful voice of the dragon.





But there was still hope. If the dog could just **fly**,
the others would **have** to acknowledge his transformation.

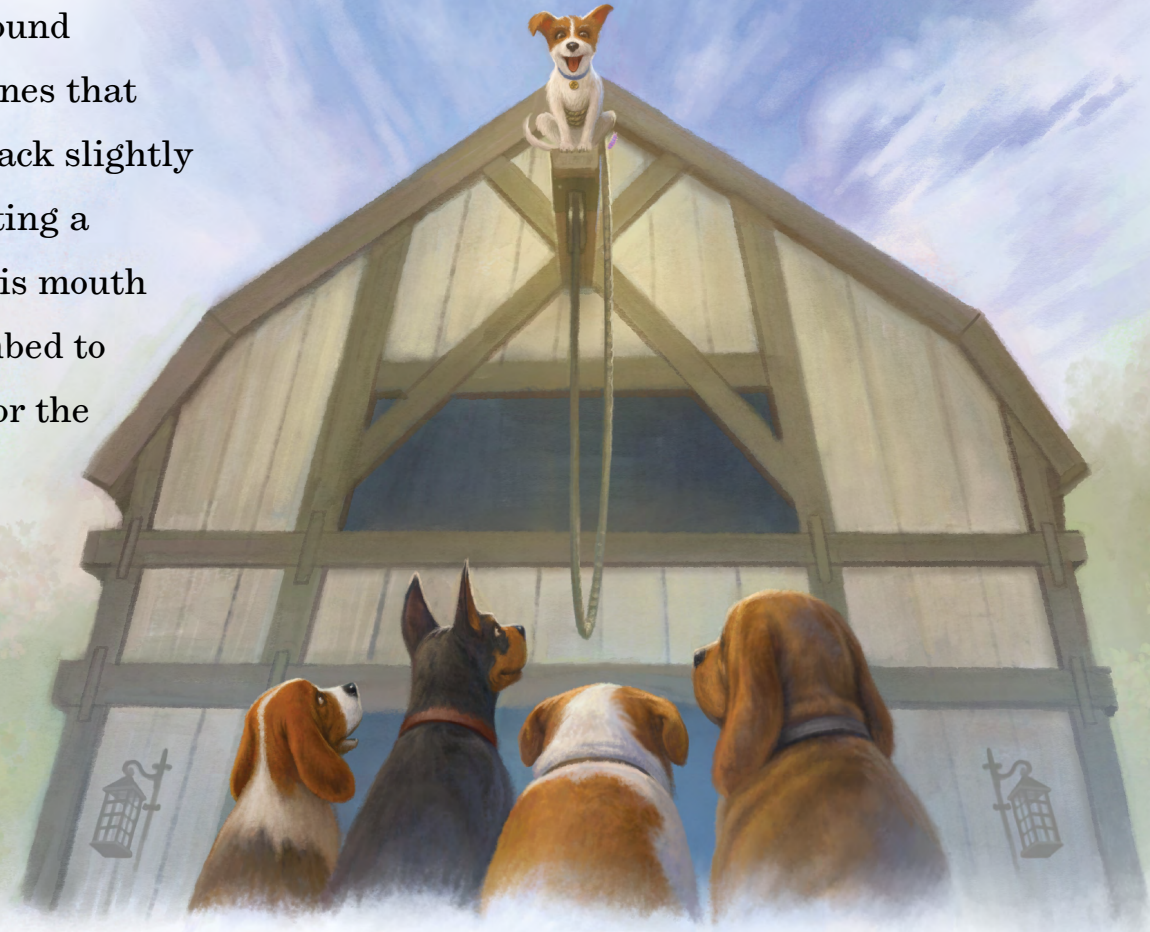
This task seemed even harder than the previous two.

However, the dog had seen a curious device in the barn. The farmer would tie bales of hay with a rope, then raise or lower them using a pulley in the rafters. This was essentially flying, was it not? The bales of hay soared in the air.



And so, over the next few days, the dog practiced pulling on the rope and learned the mechanics of the device. He found that the pulley could be balanced with a weight on the other side, which made the bales of hay lower slowly and safely.

The dog took his leash and tied it around himself to make a harness, like the ones that wrapped up the hay. Then he tied a sack slightly lighter than he was to the rope, creating a weight to balance him. After using his mouth to tie the rope to his harness, he climbed to the top of the barn's loft and called for the other dogs to come in.



When they arrived, he leaped gracefully off the loft.

The dog lowered down slowly, striking
a magnificent pose in the air.





He was **FLYING!**

He soared like the dragon had!

He felt the air around him, and knew
the sensation of being up high.

He was **so proud.**

Then the other dogs laughed the loudest they had ever laughed. “That is not flying like a dragon!” they said. “You fell slowly. You looked so stupid and silly. Go back to being a dog.”





This, at long last, crushed the dog's hopes. He realized the truth. A dog like him simply could not become a dragon. He was too small, too quiet, too silly. He untied himself and sat, morose, on the ground inside the barn. He had failed.

But . . . what was that sound?

Sudden shouting?

Yells of panic?



The dog raced out of the barn to find the farmer's family huddled around the small farmyard well, which was barely wide enough for the bucket. The dog put his paws up on the edge of the well and looked down. Far below, in the deep darkness of the hole, he heard crying and splashing.



An illustration from a top-down perspective looking into a circular stone well. A baby with curly brown hair, wearing a yellow dress with a white collar and a yellow bow, is floating in the dark water, looking up with a distressed expression. Two adults, a man and a woman, are leaning over the stone rim of the well, looking down at the baby. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right, wearing a blue dress. A small dog with white and brown patches and a blue collar is sitting on the grass outside the well, looking in. A small purple and blue striped caterpillar is on the ground near the dog. The well is made of dark grey stones, and the water is dark blue.

The baby had fallen into the well. And she was
drowning. The family screamed and wept.

There was nothing to be done.

Or . . . was there?



In a flash, the dog knew what to do. He bit the bucket off the well's rope, then had the eldest son tie the rope to his harness. He wrote "lower me" in the dirt, then hopped up onto the rim of the well. Finally, he threw himself in as the farmer grabbed the crank.





Lowered down on this rope,
the dog “flew” into the darkness.



He found the baby all the way underwater, but shoved his snout in and took hold of the baby's clothing with his teeth.



A short time later, when the family pulled him back up, the dog appeared holding the littlest child: wet, crying, but very much alive.



The family took the little dog in and set a place for him at their table. They gave him a sweater to keep him warm; it had his name written across the front with letters he could read.

They served a feast with food the dog had helped grow. They gave him some of the cake celebrating the child whose life he had saved.







That night, it rained on the other dogs, who slept outside in the cold barn, which leaked. But the little dog snuggled into a warm bed beside the fire, hugged by the farmer's children, his belly full.

And as he did, the dog thought to himself, "I doubt any dragon ever had it so good anyway."

The End



How to be a Dog

- Sleep in a bed
- Learn to play fetch
- Get a human family



