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XII

THE ENCHANTED SPADE

THERE was once a brownie called Hum who had a big garden. He was very lazy, and when the time came for him to dig his kitchen-garden from top to bottom he felt as if he really couldn't do it.

'You should buy one of those dig-away spades,' said Gillie, a friend of his. 'All you do is to stick the spade in your garden and say, "Dig away, dig away!" and it digs all by itself.'

'Ooh!' said Hum, quite excited. 'That sounds fine. Where can I get one, and how much are they?'

'Mother Chinky sells them, 'away up on Blowaway Hill,' said Gillie. 'But they are very dear, so I don't expect you will be able to buy one.'

'I'll go and find out,' said Hum. So off he went. It took him an hour to get to Mother Chinky's, and when he got there he saw all the dig-away spades neatly set out in a row in

the garden. Mother Chinky was at her front door, knitting.

'Good morning,' said Hum. 'How much are the dig-away spades?'

'Ten gold pieces each,' said Mother Chinky.

'Ooh!' said Hum. 'I've not even got *one*. Would you just lend me a spade, Mother Chinky?'

'No, indeed I won't,' said the old woman crossly. 'I've heard you are very lazy, and it won't hurt you at all to dig your garden yourself, Hum, with an ordinary spade. Go away!'

Hum turned away sulkily. Just at that moment up came Mister Biggity, the gnome. He was a big and powerful fellow, and he asked Mother Chinky if she had a dig-away spade big enough for him.

'I'm afraid I haven't,' said Mother Chinky. 'But bring me your own spade, Biggity, and I'll soon turn it into a dig-away one.'

Now as soon as Hum heard her say this he made up his mind to hide behind the wall until Biggity fetched his own spade. Then he would see what Mother Chinky did to make it a magic one. After that he would run home and turn

his own spade into a dig-away one. Oh, that was a fine plan, thought Hum.

Mister Biggity soon came back, carrying his own large spade. Mother Chinky stuck it into the ground, and danced round it three times. Then she clapped it twice on the handle and said:

Dig away, spade,
With your strong steel blade,
Dig in the ground,
Make never a sound.
Dig away, dig away, spade'

'Thank you, Mother Chinky,' said Biggity, and he went off with the spade over his shoulder. Hum stole away too, delighted to think that he knew the spell to make a dig-away spade.

As soon as he got home he fetched his spade and stuck it into the ground. Then he danced round it three times, clapped it twice on the handle, and said the magic rhyme:

'Dig away, spade,
With your strong steel blade,
Dig in the ground,
Make never a sound.
Dig away, dig away, spade'

At once his spade began to dig all by itself. It was wonderful to see it. It delved deep into the earth, threw up the clods, and dug down

deep again. It worked in a straight row, and Hum stood and watched it in delight. Soon it finished the first row and started on the next.

Hum went indoors to cook his dinner. After a while he looked out of the window. The dig-away spade had finished digging all the kitchen-garden, and was now digging in the rose-garden!

'Hey, stop!' shouted Hum, rushing into the garden. 'Don't dig there, stupid spade! You'll dig up all my roses! Keep to the kitchen-garden. Dig it over again, if you want some more work to do!'

But the spade wouldn't stop. It dug up a beautiful rose tree and sent it flying in the air. Then it dug up another. Hum couldn't bear it. He rushed to the spade, and tried to take it away from his roses. But the spade gave him such a blow on his toes that he ran away howling in pain.

'Oh, oh!' he cried. 'It's hurt me; it's hurt me! Stop, you nasty spade, stop!'

But the spade simply would *not* stop. It dug up each of the rose trees, and then started on the daffodil bulbs that were just beginning to send up tall green leaves. Hum cried with rage, but it wasn't a bit of good. He couldn't

make the spade stop, and he didn't dare to go near it again in case it dug him on the toes.

After the dig-away spade had dug up all the bulbs it began to dig up the garden fence! Oh, what a dreadful thing to do! Hum called to it to stop, he begged it to stop, and he wept with big tears, but the spade took no notice at all.

'It'll dig my house up next!' wept Hum. 'There's only one thing to do—I must go and fetch Mother Chinky!'

Off he ran to Mother Chinky, and wasn't she surprised to see him! When she heard what had happened she began to laugh—and she laughed and she laughed and she laughed.

'Oh, dear, oh, dear!' she said. 'This is the best joke I've heard for years! Fancy you putting the dig-away spell on your spade, and not bothering to find out how to make it stop digging! Well, it will certainly dig up your house, Hum!'

'Oh, don't laugh any more!' begged Hum. 'Do, do tell me how to stop it. I'm dreadfully sorry I took the spell without asking you, now, and I'll do anything you like if only you'll tell me how to stop the spade from digging any more.'

'Well, if I tell you that, you can just come to me every Monday and do my washing for two months,' said Mother Chinky. 'I've a nasty pain in my back, and can't stoop over my wash-tub as I used to. And you're so lazy that it will be good for you to have some hard work to do for once!'

'I'll do it for you,' promised Hum. 'But do quickly tell me how to stop the spade digging.'

'Well, all you've got to do is to clap your hands twice and say:

"Rest, spade, rest.
You've done your very best,"

said Mother Chinky.

Hum raced off down the hill as fast as he could go. When he got home he found that every plant in his garden had been dug up, his fence was lying flat on the ground, and the spade was just digging up his tool-shed.

He clapped his hands twice and shouted:

'Rest, spade, rest.
You've done your very best.'

At once the spade stopped working, and stood quite still in the ground. Hum groaned when he looked at all the damage that had been done.

'Instead of saving me work that horrid spade has made enough work to keep me busy for weeks!' sighed Hum. 'There are all those plants and rose trees to put back, the fence to put up again, and the tool-shed to mend. And I've got to go and do Mother Chinky's washing too! Well, I'll never be lazy again, if I can help it!'

And, so Mother Chinky says, Hum has turned over quite a new leaf, and works as hard as anybody now. You should just see how well he does her washing every Monday!