
In the Dragon's Claws

from **Sea of Trolls** by Nancy Farmer



Jack and Thorgil are two young travellers making a journey to the land of the Troll. Already their Viking warrior companion has been killed in a mighty combat with a troll-bear and they are continuing their terrifying quest alone.



A good versus evil theme in which good usually wins; contains elements of magic; includes values of valour, courage and love

For such a large creature, the dragon was able to float along with scarcely a sound, or at least nothing

Jack could hear over the wind and his own laboured breathing. She came up behind them like a leaf coasting on a breeze. Her claws swooped them up before he could even scream.

She did not kill them at once. That would have been too kind. She merely picked them up from the ground and sped off with her talons locked around them like a cage. For a moment Jack couldn't understand what had happened. He was surrounded by black bars – bars that were hot. He saw the ground disappear. He felt the wind whistle past his ears.

He heard a terrible, deafening, heart-stopping shriek and recognized it at once. It was the same challenge that had been hurled at Olaf's funeral pyre. "It's the – it's the—" Jack couldn't get the words out. The dizzying ride and his own fear made him sick.

"It's the dragon," Thorgil finished for him. He saw her trying to chip away at the talons with her knife. She was woozy and weak but still attempting to fight.

"It's hot," Jack said. And it was, uncomfortably so. The talons radiated heat, and he had to shift to keep from getting burned. By now they were high above the ground. The dragon flew along, level with the cliffs. Each wing-beat blew a blast of heat past Jack's face, and the dragon's bones creaked mournfully, like a ship under full sail. *It's a knorr*, Jack thought foolishly, echoing Olaf's words from weeks ago: *They call it that because the timbers creak the whole time – knorr, knorr, knorr. It takes getting used to.*

The dragon rose and hovered in the air. She opened her talons, and Jack and Thorgil tumbled out into a ring of stone. Around them beady eyes watched intently.

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Jack realized, with a sick rush of terror, that they had been brought – as a cat might bring mice for her kittens – to teach the dragonlets how to hunt.

“Strike between the chest plates below their necks,” Thorgil said in a low voice. “That’s what Olaf told me.”

Jack could hardly believe his ears. She was up and ready for battle. He was anything but ready. He found himself hypnotized by the

dragonlets. They hissed and swayed back and forth, craning their necks. Their eyes were lit with evil intent. How could Thorgil think of fighting now? It was all over. They were doomed.

Four of the monsters – each twice Jack’s size – were working up the courage to follow their mother’s bidding. The dragon crouched at the side of the nest, making a bubbling noise like a pot of boiling water. Her great, golden eyes were half closed.



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Characters (often children) who go on a dangerous quest, often meeting frightening characters, who grow in strength and independence