

King of the Wild Horses

Far away in an icy country, where the forests are dense and dark, there once lived a farmer called Alek. He was so poor that the violent wind sneaked in through the cracks in the door and the snow slipped through the wide holes in the roof. Sadly, he was so poor that his little, old mother sat in her bed with a pointy icicle suspended from her cold nose!

Early one frosty morning, Alek went out to feed his cattle at the barn. The snow lay in a thick crust on the fields, ice glittered on the path and the water trough was frozen like a mirror. At that moment, Alek heard an abnormal noise in the distance. Something was caught in the brambles beside the barn. It was a beautiful, white horse. Calming the horse down, Alek pulled the brambles to one side and set the horse free. To his amazement, the horse turned and spoke to him. "Alek, I am King of the wild horses. For setting me free, I can grant you one wish. Come back at midnight when the moon is high and tell me your heart's desire." Then the horse shook its mane, turned and galloped away.

All afternoon, Alek paced up and down, speculating what he should wish for. In the end, his ancient father came in, almost bent double with the weight of his years. "Father, father. If you had but one wish, what would it be?" asked Alek.

"I'd wish for my eyesight for I have been blind these past ten years." Of course, his father was right! If he could see, his father might help with sowing the seeds and reaping the harvest.

But then, Alek's mother came in. "Mother, mother. If you had but one wish, what would it be?" asked Alek.

"I'd wish for gold. Why, we are so poor that we will either starve or freeze to death!" Of course, his mother was right too! There was never enough to eat and the pinch of winter was dreadful!

Finally, Alek's wife came in. "Wife, wife. If you had but one wish, what would it be?" asked Alek.

"I'd wish for a baby to bring joy into our lives." Of course, his wife was right too! But then, so was his mother... and so was his father! Alek did not know what to wish for.

At midnight, Alek trudged down to the old, dilapidated barn. The moon was like a white coin in the night and the bright stars freckled the darkness. It was icy cold. Thundering across the fields came the white horse. "What is your wish?" it called to Alek. At that moment, Alek had an idea. At first it was just a seed of an idea but soon the seed took root. Standing still, beneath the grinning moon and the speckled stars, he called out. "I wish for my father to see our baby in a cradle made of gold!" "Good wish," whinnied the horse, galloping away.

Alek made his way back to the old cottage and, as he came up the path, he heard a sound that he had not heard before coming from the bedroom. It was the sound of a baby crying! A grin stretched across his face as he pushed open the creaky cottage door.