

THE MAGIC HORSE

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The Magic Horse

VILLAGE OGGLIA

NARRATOR

Once there was a kingdom known as Ogglia. King Dunya ruled over the city, farms and villages with knowledge and justice.

The king loved inventions and gadgets. He looked forward to the great annual competitions for the best invention.

His son, Prince Qalb, was a dreamer. The prince imagined epic adventures in caves and mountain peaks, saving beautiful princesses from terrifying beasts and dragons, but always, of course, coming out alive. He fantasized receiving the admiration of his subjects, distributing his hard-won riches to charities and attending gala openings. There were so many possibilities of fame, glory, wealth, quests and conquests.

And of course his father the king was annoyed with him. King Dunya wanted his kingdom to be successful, and, because he understood the ways of the world, promoted research, development and education. He wanted his people to be on the cutting edge, making and creating new and useful things. That way money would keep flowing. The king, to be honest, enjoyed the inventions: shiny buttons, flashing lights, the marvels of technology made his eyes sparkle and his hands itch to flick and click the switches to light up the colourful displays.

Every year about this time he announced to the entire populace through all the media:

PROCLAMATION

All those who wish to compete for "Greatest Inventor" will present their creations in one month at the castle.

NARRATOR

King Dunya would then roam the city and suburbs in various disguises to see what new inventions the people were constructing.

KING DUNYA

Prince Qalb - you should come with me, see the people and their fine inventions, farms and markets. Learn what they want, what they need.

PRINCE QALB

No thanks, father. I prefer to stay home and read my books about knights battling dragons and saving maidens.

KING DUNYA

You are such a dreamer. When are you going to live? Make something of yourself?

NARRATOR

It gave the king much pleasure to see his people creating devices and vehicles that travelled beneath the ground, some that flew both fast and slow in the sky, and some that created new kinds of foods and metals. As he passed a park, he saw a simple woodworker going into the nearby forest. He wondered.

KING DUNYA

Why would someone want to carve wood when we have all these wonderful mechanical things?

NARRATOR

The day for inspecting the best invention arrived. The line of people stretched beyond the throne room and across the moat bridge, each person either pushing something covered on wheels, or holding a package in a box. Each one presented their invention to the king. He finally decided that the burrowing mole-like metal digger-explorer invention would be of most benefit for the kingdom. Besides travelling and seeing new places, it could also mine and discover ores and precious jewels deep underground.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The woodcarver was there, too. After everyone had left he was still standing, waiting to see the king. Prince Qalb noticed him.

PRINCE QALB

Woodcarver, have you presented your invention to the king?

WOODCARVER

Prince the award has already been given, and there is no hope for me. I guess I should return to my home in the woods.

PRINCE QALB

Wait - there may be an opportunity.

NARRATOR

And he was right. Two weeks later the king was finally bored after playing with all the wonderful gadgets and wanted something new to do. Prince Qalb told him about the woodcarver.

KING DUNYA

All right. He might be entertaining. Call the woodcarver!

NARRATOR

In came the elderly woodcarver, carrying a large object wrapped in brown paper. He placed it before the king. With shaking hands, he removed the paper. Everyone bent forward in anticipation...

KING DUNYA

(yelling)

A wooden horse? What am I, Woodcarver?

WOODCARVER

The- the King, Your Majesty.

KING DUNYA

Why have you brought a child's toy to me, king of all the wonderful inventors? Do I look like a five year old? Do I play in the sandbox? Do I wear diapers?

WOODCARVER

N-no, Your Majesty but-

KING DUNYA

This is insulting! I am a King!

WOODCARVER

But Your Majesty - this is a special wooden horse.

KING DUNYA

Sure it is. I can see you've painted it, and sculpted it to look fairly convincing as a horse - but what's so special about that? I see these on merry-go-rounds, and carousels.

WOODCARVER

Sire, it is a Magic horse. It can take whoever sits upon it to their heart's desire...

KING DUNYA

Blah, blah, blah, This is nonsense. Only my do-nothing son would be interested in anything like this.

PRINCE QALB

Father! Yes, I will take care of it! Give it to me, please!

KING DUNYA

All right. Take it. And guards! Throw the woodcarver in the dungeon. Maybe some quality prison time will get him to think a little more clearly about what's important and what is just plain silly!

NARRATOR

The poor woodcarver was taken away, and Prince Qalb took the wooden horse to his room. He sat upon the horse, imagining himself in one of his imagined stories when suddenly the horse rose up, lifted him out the window and sped into the sky. Within minutes it returned. He was so excited about the flying horse he went to tell his father who was visiting the Great Room of Wonderful Inventions but just before he was about to speak the king said,

KING DUNYA

Son. Do you see all these wonderful inventions? They were made for the good of all. Each one has a purpose. They weren't made just for me.

PRINCE QALB

I don't understand. Don't you like them because they have lots of switches?

KING DUNYA

No, you fool. They enrich the land, they bring money, the people are happy, this is for the good of all. This is what I want.

NARRATOR

Back in his room, sitting on the wooden horse, the prince wonders.

PRINCE QALB

I have nothing. I know nothing. I don't know what I can do or make for the 'good of all'. I am so selfish. I don't even know what I want.

NARRATOR

As he sat on the horse, his fingers traced the face of the horse, discovering cleverly concealed buttons and switches. He pushed a few saying,

PRINCE QALB

I wish I knew what was for the good of all. And I wish I knew my heart's desire!

NARRATOR

Suddenly the horse rose up, turned and flew out through the window and across three oceans, seven great mountain ranges, over thrilling exotic landscapes, silent forests, noisy green jungles, plains teeming with wild animals, villages of strange peoples and stranger customs, river worlds, cliff-side cities - sights rarely seen. After several days of exploring the amazing sites and wonders, the wooden horse descended into the courtyard of a palace floating in the sky.

THE FLOATING PALACE

NARRATOR

Stunned and surprised, he got off the horse and looked over the side to see clouds far beneath him floating above the world. He stood and looked around at the silent castle. He walked to the fountain in the courtyard and splashed his face.

PRINCE QALB

Where am I? Why did the horse bring me here?

NARRATOR

He was looking into the water when a beautiful woman's face appeared next to his.

AURIANNA

Welcome to my world.

NARRATOR

He turned to see a young woman in a long blue dress with an intricately carved walking stick.

PRINCE QALB

Hel-hello. Sorry to disturb you... I didn't mean to bother-

AURIANNA

Bother? Are you kidding? This is my prison. How did you get here?

PRINCE QALB

I arrived on my magic horse... who are you?

AURIANNA

A magic horse? That's a new one. I am Princess Aurianna. My father, King Kahhar, is the ruler of the land beneath us. He put me here, he said, to keep me safe until he marries me to Prince West. I am the means by which the lands will be united. My father gets richer, I have to marry someone I don't know... I'm just some kind of *politics*.

PRINCE QALB

You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen or imagined.

NARRATOR

Well, let me tell you that was the beginning of a relationship that - well - they fell in love! After they had been together for two days Aurianna said,

AURIANNA

You must go. My father will be coming soon.

PRINCE QALB

I can take you away from here on my magic horse.

AURIANNA

No, you can't. This castle has a spell on it. I am trapped here until my father releases me.

PRINCE QALB

Okay. I'll go talk to him and ask him to release you.

AURIANNA

Are you crazy!? He'll chop you up into bits! Tiny, little bits. He won't like it that I have a new... 'friend'.

NARRATOR

The prince, imagining he was a hero in one of his stories said

PRINCE QALB

I'll figure something out. Don't worry!

NARRATOR

And with that, he jumped on the magic horse and flew down through the clouds. He landed behind the castle to discover he was in the middle of a great metropolis. He hid the horse and walked down a side street.

THE BIG CITY

NARRATOR

In all of his adventures, never had he seen such a bustling, thriving, colourful city. So many kinds of clothing, smells, buildings, and the sounds! There was honking, beeping, music, hundreds of people walking quickly and busily.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Businesses and stalls of every possible product and service... He wanted to sample everything!

PRINCE QALB

I've got time to get to the palace, so first let's try some of this fish! One of these, please. Oh, and look at this! You say this is 'beer'? And these are - 'taxis', 'oysters' ... ?

NARRATOR

He got distracted. There were some who figured he had money and they became his instant friends, and guided him around the city. They showed him how to gamble, and introduced him to various kinds of women at the bars, pubs, nightclubs and saloons.

Later, his money was all gone. So were the "friends." Drunk, sad and somewhat confused, he sat at a keyboard in the back of a pub and played the 'blues'.

When he was finally able to get himself sober enough, he went back to the guard at the castle entrance.

PRINCE QALB

I'd like to see the king.

GUARD

No way, buddy. He's gone to get his daughter from the sky-palace. Should be back in a while.

PRINCE QALB

(thinking)

Why should I wait? I'll make a smart and bold move and fly on the magic horse to the king's rooms to wait for him.

IN THE PALACE

NARRATOR

He waited. And waited. His eyelids started to fall down, down... he crawled behind the curtains and fell asleep.

He woke to hear a banging, tapping and swearing.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He looked around the curtain to see the Magician-King Kahhar and his servants poking and twisting the knobs on his wooden horse. King Kahhar boomed out,

KAHHAR

My daughter said some fool on a wooden horse visited her in my forbidden sky-palace! And here it is! That means he's somewhere in the palace! Find him! This thing doesn't work anyway. Must have run out of fuel or something. Stow it in a closet.

NARRATOR

Scared of what they might do to him, the prince climbed out of a window and balanced along the outer walls and ledges. Hanging above the moat, he dropped into the water swam to the shore and then ran as fast as he could. He kept running through the night.

THE DESERT ROAD

NARRATOR

As the sun rose over the mountains, he was horrified to see that the road headed straight across a desert! He had no supplies, no water, not even a camel. His princely slippers were too thin - the heat from the road wall already scorching his feet. He was certainly not ready to cross scorpion-infested, snake-biting, vulture-filled sand dunes. He tried resting during the day and travelling by night. But there no shade. And he was so thirsty, and now his stomach growled for food. The few bugs he saw he imagined as tasty treats - like candy only crawling. He grabbed at worms and grubs and chewed them to survive. The sun beat down mercilessly day after day. He frequently left the road fooled by mirages - bars and poker machines that weren't really there. Eventually, he stumbled along the path in a kind of trance, and began to yell at the various people in his short life.

PRINCE QALB

Why did you do this to me, father? You're an idiot! Why didn't you prepare for things like this?! You are so stupid and filled with shiny things! Aurianna! Why did I ever meet you? I love you! I hate you! That was my life! This stinking painted horse! I hate you, too! I wish I'd never met that woodcarver! Every one of you put me here! I'm going to die in the desert heat! I'm burning up! I'm going to bake and my bones will turn into ashes and more desert and... I smell something sweet...?

NARRATOR

As he began to head into the foot of the mountains, he saw- flowers, trees! Gurgling... Water! He followed the sound to discover a hidden grove with a stream.

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

NARRATOR

He ran to the bank of the creek, threw himself down and drank the sweetest water he'd ever had. As he drank, he began to notice animals around him. There were possums, squirrels, rats, pigs, even larger ones like donkeys, kangaroos and dogs. He then turned over and looked at a branch heavy with luscious ripe fruit. He rubbed his eyes to make sure it was not another mirage. It wasn't! He stood up and picked one and took a small bite. Delicious! He began to bite into them, picking each one quickly, the juice dripping from his chin. After just a few moments, he felt like he had just finished a banquet. He was so tired and happy and full that he curled up underneath the bough of the tree and fell asleep. Later that day he woke up. He felt odd - an off-balance kind of feeling. He looked into the pool of water and saw - a monster! An animal with a pig's snout, donkey ears, and his hands - they were covered in fur!

PRINCE QALB
Must be a bad dream...

NARRATOR
...Thought the prince. He pinched himself, threw himself at the tree but only managed to bruise his strangely contorted head.

PRINCE QALB
What have I become? I am a monster! A beast! An ugly looking donkey-eared 'thing'! My life is over! No one will want me - especially Princess Aurianna!

NARRATOR
He fell down on the ground into a deep sleep as the sun set. It was very late at night when he opened his eyes. The unfamiliar stars overhead made him feel lonely, lost, bewildered, confused and frightened. There was a light moving in the woods across the river. It seemed to be following a path towards him. Finally, he could see that it was a lamp held by an old woman in a white dress with a scarf.

SAGE
Ah - you've eaten the fruit, haven't you?

PRINCE QALB
(braying)
Yes!

SAGE
Shouldn't have done that. But they all do. They never think. And all these animals did the same thing. Shame, really. But I can help you. But do you want my help?

PRINCE QALB
(thinking)
Is she the owner of this enchanted garden? Is she a witch who would trick me - and then something even more terrible happen? Do I have a choice? What do I have to lose? No one would want me the way I am, anyway.
(aloud)
Yes. Please. Help me.

SAGE

Certainly. Don't eat the fruit hanging from the tree. You'll find dried fruit underneath. Eat that. Then follow your destiny. And always brush your teeth. Oh, and make some new slippers. Yes. And maybe think before you speak. Or act. Wait, I've got more advice...
(fade)

NARRATOR

The prince began to eat the dried fruit from beneath the tree. Almost immediately he could feel the changes happening. He looked into the pool of water and could see his face returning to its familiar shape. He let out a long sigh of relief. He was himself again. As the sun began to rise, he could hear horses and bells approaching. A procession! People were coming! Still dazed several well-dressed courtiers galloped up to him.

COURTIER

Hey, Gardener! We noticed your grove and our prince is hungry. He wants some of your odd pears.

NARRATOR

Prince Qalb stared goggle-eyed at the fancy-dressed people. He still wasn't quite used to his mouth being its own shape again. With regal bearing, a royal young man arrived on his horse.

PRINCE WEST

I am Prince West. Here's a bag of gold, garden keeper. I am taking some of your fruit. I'm in a hurry to meet my bride - Princess Aurianna daughter of King Kahhar.

NARRATOR

All that Prince Qalb could do was gesture to the prince to go ahead, and allow him to eat all the fruit he wanted. Then he lay down in his colorful tent. About an hour later there was bellowing, howling and some very rude words coming from the tent.
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The courtiers rushed out afraid and bewildered, and ran up to Prince Qalb.

COURTIER

He's turned into a monster! He thinks we're strange and he's normal! What have you done to him?

PRINCE QALB

I haven't done anything. He wanted the fruit and he took it. Shame, really.

COURTIER

What are we going to do?

PRINCE QALB

If you don't get him away from here soon, he'll turn into one of these animals!

COURTIER

No! No, no, no! The king will cut off our heads! Our mission is to get the prince to his wedding! We can't go back to his father with him looking like that! And- hey! Wait a minute! You're the same size... We could disguise Prince West as a servant, and you could wear his clothes. You could pretend to be the prince since King Kahhar has never seen him. Then we wouldn't have to delay the wedding, bring you all back to our king and let him unravel the problem.

PRINCE QALB

(thinking)

Maybe this is my destiny the old woman referred to.

(aloud)

Agreed.

NARRATOR

They all jumped on Prince West, changed his clothes, and covered him up as a servant, tying him to the horse. They made their way back across the desert to the kingdom and finally arrived at the castle of King Kahhar.

KAHHAR'S THRONE ROOM

NARRATOR

There in the magnificent throne room of King Kahhar the courtiers presented their pretend-prince. Princess Aurianna, standing by her father, looked up to see... her beloved Prince Qalb! She was about to say something, when he whispered to her,

PRINCE QALB

Shh! Don't say anything yet. I'll explain it all very soon.

NARRATOR

The wedding ceremony was held amidst great celebration. The courtiers kept a close eye on the couple, and as soon as possible they went up to King Kahhar and said,

COURTIER

Oh mighty and glorious king! Our astrologers say that the time to return comes quickly, or there will be awful storms and terrible catastrophes! We ask leave that we return to our king with your beautiful daughter, now that the relations of our kingdoms are united.

PRINCE QALB

(whispered)

Aurianna, don't leave without the wooden horse.

NARRATOR

And with the eyes that only a daughter can make to a father,

AURIANNA

Oh, Father. I have such fond memories of playing here when I was young. I hope you don't mind if I bring the little wooden horse with me to remind me of you and those days?

KAHHAR

Well that's just bloody silly! It reminds you of someone, doesn't it?

COURTIER

Sire, Please - we really need to go now. Let her have it. After all, it's just a toy and it may remind her of her life growing up with you and her friends.

KAHHAR

All right, daughter. Take it with my blessings.

NARRATOR

And with that, the procession left the castle that day and began to travel back across the desert and over the mountain pass towards the kingdom of the west.

DESERT CAMP

NARRATOR

At the first camp in the desert, Prince West untied himself, and ripped off the servant coverings.

PRINCE WEST

Enough! I have had enough! You have all belittled and mocked me and now it's my turn to equalize the equation. Listen here, you weasly donkey rat!

NARRATOR

Prince West grabbed Prince Qalb by the throat and started to choke him.

PRINCE WEST

You little worm! You turned me into a monster and took my woman! I don't know who or what you are, but if you don't tell me instantly how to remove this enchantment I'm going to stick your head in the sand and bake you alive!

NARRATOR

Princess Aurianna sneaked up behind Prince West and smacked him on the head with her walking stick. As soon as he fell Prince Qalb and the princess ran to the wooden horse and sat upon it.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The prince moved the levers in the horse's head, they rose up into the air and like a bullet, shot out over the desert, across the seven mountain ranges and three mighty oceans and landed back in the kingdom of Ogglia.

VILLAGE OGGLIA

KING DUNYA

Oh my son. I am so pleased and relieved to see you. And who is this?

PRINCE QALB

Oh, Father, I have learned so much - and this is Princess Aurianna - your new daughter-in-law!

NARRATOR

And when the king heard the story of the magic horse he released the woodcarver from the dungeon and proclaimed him "Greatest Inventor of All."

CONCLUSION

NARRATOR

King Dunya retired, and the prince and princess took his place as rulers of the kingdom. The people of that kingdom have a strange saying still current. You may have heard it:
Those who want inventions can achieve much through inventions, but whoever wants their heart's desire, must first hear the story of The Magic Horse.