

## The king's horse

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a country that had a King. Or maybe we should say, once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a King who had a country because His Majesty did whatever he pleased without consulting anybody and everyone was terrified of him. He was such a nasty and cruel man, that when his servants saw him coming, they hid behind the doors, under the beds and even under the rugs. But there was one thing he really loved - his horse. He adored it. He cared for it even more than he did about the people in his kingdom. But one day his horse fell ill. And of course, no one talked about anything besides the illness that had befallen "The King's Horse".

The King was very upset and applying all of his royal wisdom - which you'll see, wasn't much - he ordered his servants to take care of the horse as though he were his child, that is to say, as though he were a prince. He ordered them to tuck him in bed and feed him boiled rice and ham for breakfast, lunch and supper.

The servants thought that was ridiculous, but they did as they were told. And, of course, with a diet like that the poor horse got even sicker.

When the veterinarian told him that there was nothing he could do for the horse, the King began bawling like a little child. But then he quickly remembered that he was a king, the King, and so he acted like a king. He took a majestic breath befitting a king, and in a royal voice he ordered his servants to take the horse to the countryside to see if the country air would cure its ills.

"Ah, and woe be to you if he dies", he said to them, "because if he dies", he shouted, raising a threatening royal finger in the air and growling like a bear, "I want to know about it right away, but the poor fool who dares to tell me that my horse has died will be hung from the highest gallows."

Trembling with fear, the poor servants carried off the horse as best they could, because he was so ill he couldn't even stand up, and they took him to the countryside. When they arrived they did everything in their power to nurse him back to health. But the poor creature's condition went from bad to worse and a week later he kicked the bucket, which is another way of saying he died.

"Now what do we do?" exclaimed the horrified servants. "If we don't tell the King, he'll find out sooner or later and he'll have our heads. But if we tell him that the horse is dead, he'll have us strung up like dried cod from the highest gallows."

The poor servants were right to be terrified: they had no way out!

As they were pondering their dilemma, a young girl passed by. She lived alone in a shack outside the village and everyone considered her a simpleton and somewhat of a dimwit, because she was capable of saying the most outrageous things to anyone at all. So, when she heard them bemoaning their situation, she offered to go to the king and tell him that his horse had died. But, they would have to pay her six gold coins to do that.

The servants, trembling with fear, told her what would happen to her if she went to the King. But she told them not to worry, that she would handle it, so the servants happily accepted the girl's proposal and paid her the money she asked for.

And so the poor simpleton appeared at the palace saying that she had come to deliver news about the King's horse. When the King learned that she was there, he had her brought before him immediately and asked the girl how his horse was doing. The girl then told him that the horse was no longer eating or drinking, peeing or poo-ing, or breathing...

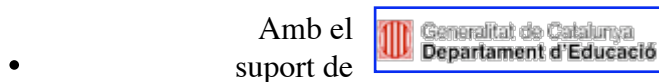
"So," said the King in a fury, standing up from his throne and turning all the colors of the rainbow, "that means...that my horse is dead!"

"You said it! I didn't", said the girl as she bowed and calmly left the room. "And I've done my job!"

And she wandered away as the King, stunned by the cleverness of that little urchin, just bit his tongue, his royal tongue, of course.

And that's how that poor simpleton of a girl, was able to build herself a house with the money she had earned; not exactly a palace, but at least a real house.

*Script: Manel Riera-Eures*



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