

Three Horses

Tri koně

anglické a české
texty

kontrolní otázky

vysvětlení frází
a gramatických
jevů

cvičení s klíčem

Baltské pohádky Jaroslava Tichého
přeložila a pro výuku zpracovala
Alena Kuzmová

THREE HORSES

Baltic Fairy Tales by
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Předmluva

Kniha *Three Horses* obsahuje šest krásných pohádek zpracovaných v anglicko-českém znění. Pohádky byly vybrány z původní knihy Jaroslava Tichého *Diamantová sekera*, která vyšla poprvé v roce 1964 a od té doby se dočkala řady vydání. Krásné a poučné pohádky pobaltských národů jsou stále oblíbené mezi dětskými i dospělými čtenáři. Vystupují v nich jak prostí lidé, tak i urození bohatíři, nadpřirozené bytosti, chytrá zvířátka a zázračné předměty.

Kniha *Three Horses* je určena středně pokročilým studentům angličtiny, kteří si chtějí četbou dále rozšiřovat slovní zásobu, naučit se vyprávět příběhy v anglickém jazyce, osvojit si zajímavá slovní spojení a procvičit si gramatiku. Za anglickým zněním pohádky následuje vždy český překlad, což umožňuje samoukům porozumět dobře celému příběhu. Za každou pohádkou najdete souhrnné otázky, vysvětlení obtížnějších frází a několika gramatických jevů, které si můžete procvičit v následujících cvičeních. Odpovědi na souhrnné otázky a řešení ke cvičením jsou obsaženy v klíči na konci knihy.

Milí studenti, přála bych si, abyste s knihou *Three Horses* strávili příjemné chvíle. Doufám, že vám četba poskytne nejen zábavu, ale také radost z pokroku, kterého jste již ve studiu angličtiny dosáhli.

Vaše

Alena Kuzmová

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Three Horses

I don't know in which country and in what days, but once upon a time there was a king. There were thick forests, vast fields and fertile meadows in his dependencies. Everything would have been as it should be if hay hadn't started to disappear in the meadows. Every night three haycocks disappeared without trace. The king's servants could run their feet off, they were awake for the whole nights, but it was all in vain. They couldn't catch the thief and guard the haycocks.

And so the king commanded to announce all over the kingdom: "He who'll catch the thief – even if it was the poorest beggar – can marry one of the king's three daughters."

Not far from the royal palace lived a peasant whose three sons were growing up just at that time. The oldest son, who was the craftiest of them, heard about the king's announcement and said: "My beloved mother, my dear father! I'll go to catch the thief. Maybe you'll see your son walking down the aisle with the king's daughter one day."

"All right then, go!" said Father. Mother didn't say anything. She only baked white bread, cut a slice of bacon, boiled eggs and put it

all into the sack so that her son wouldn't be sad when he was awake at night. He was her favourite.

And so the oldest son set off for the king's meadow. He sat down behind a haycock, put his sack in front of him and started having dinner. He was eating bread and bacon and breaking one egg after another when suddenly a lizard ran out from the grass and said: "Give me a tiny little too. I'm hungry."

"Like hell I will!" answered the oldest son. "Do you really think that my mother has prepared the meal for you? Run away while you are in one piece!"

"All right then," said the lizard. "But remember: you won't succeed in what you've resolved." And it vanished into thin air.

Having eaten to his heart's content, the oldest son climbed onto the haycock. 'Here I'll have the whole meadow in front of me like on the plate,' he said to himself. He sat on the haycock and kept looking till he fell asleep. When he woke up in the morning, the haycock that he'd slept on at night was gone. And two others which had stood nearby had disappeared too. The oldest son had no choice but to come back home.

His younger brother – he was up to all the dodges too – started to poke fun at him: "Although you are the oldest, it didn't get you anywhere. When I come there, the thief won't run away from me!" And he went. But he experienced the same thing as his older brother.

And then the youngest son, who was thought to be a simpleton, said: “Daddy and Mummy! And what if I went? I may catch the thief.”

“Not by any means!” they pitched into him. “Your clever brothers couldn’t catch him, and you, a silly, should make it? Don’t go anywhere!”

But the youngest son didn’t obey. He took a bread crust – his mother hadn’t given him anything for the trip – and went. He walked straight into the royal palace and said: “Do show me the king’s little daughters! I must have a look at them so that I know whether they are young and pretty. Maybe they aren’t even worth the trouble.”

The king and his courtiers couldn’t help laughing at the country manners. But in the end the king commanded to send for the princesses after all.

“Well, do you like my daughters? You may find them old. Or do you think they aren’t pretty?” asked the king.

“No, they are pretty,” answered the youngest son. “All of them are beautiful as the sun but I like best the youngest one. I’ll marry her when I’ve caught the thief.”

“First you must catch him,” said the king, “and after that you can choose.”

“I’ll do so,” said the youth. He took off his cap, made a bow to the princesses and left for the meadow.

He stopped in the middle of the meadow and started to think: ‘How should I do that? Shall I have something to eat first and then

guard? Or shall I first guard and then have dinner?’ At last he decided to take some food first. He sat down behind a haycock, took out the bread crust and suddenly saw a lizard running around.

“Give me a little,” said the lizard. “I’d like to try it too.”

“To tell the truth, I don’t have exactly a big stock,” answered the youngest son. “But I’ll give you half of what I’ve brought.”

The lizard devoured the bread in two shakes and said: “You’ll succeed in what you’ve resolved. Climb onto the haycock and sleep peacefully. When the thieves come, I’ll wake you up, and then it’ll be just up to you. At midnight, three horses will appear in the meadow; seize two of them by their manes and mount the third one. And don’t be afraid of anything, everything will turn out well.”

The youngest son did as the lizard had advised: he climbed onto the haycock and fell asleep. At midnight, the lizard gave him a scratch on his face with its little paw. He woke up, rubbed his eyes and suddenly saw three horses going down from the sky to the ground. The first horse’s hair shone with silver, the second one’s gleamed with gold and the third one’s sparkled with diamonds. The horses flew down and directly to the hay. At that moment the youth jumped to his feet, seized two horses by their manes and got on the third one.

But what started going on now! The horses flew up to the sky. The youngest son almost held his breath. His ears were buzzing, his curls were streaming in the wind. The horses flew up to the very clouds and whinnied: “Dismount, man, or you’ll come to grief!”

“No, I won’t,” said the youngest son. “I still feel like riding.”

The horses started to gallop again. They flew up to the very stars and whinnied: “Dismount, man, or you’ll come to grief!”

“That remains to be seen who’ll come to grief,” answered the youth. “You are already all covered with foam, but I’m not, I just hold tight.”

Thereupon the horses started flying even more swiftly. They flew up to the Moon and whinnied for the third time: “Dismount, man, or you’ll come to grief!”

“Well, I’d dismount for all I care. But you’ve flown up too high for me to reach the ground. When you get tired of the tag about the sky, let yourselves down and I’ll dismount.”

What could they do? They tore down like boulders from the mountains. The youth didn’t move a muscle and they stood on all fours on the ground again.

“Well,” said the horses, “you’ve defeated us. But it’s no shame to serve such a strapping young man like you. Now take off the bridles from us and hide them in your bosom. And if you sometimes feel like going for a horse ride, just wave a bridle and we’ll appear in front of you in no time. If you wave the silver bridle, the silver horse will run up to you. If you wave the golden one, the golden horse will appear. And if you give a sign with the diamond bridle, then you can expect the diamond horse. And in accordance with the horse you mount, you’ll wear the clothes too. If you sit down on the silver horse, you’ll get dressed in silver, if you mount the golden one, you’ll sparkle with gold, the diamond horse will cover you in diamonds from head to toe. And don’t be afraid, we’ll never touch

the king's hay any more." After saying this, the horses disappeared as if the earth had swallowed them.

The youngest son waited till the morning and then went to the palace. "And now I'll marry your youngest princess," he said to the king. "All haycocks stand in their places like yesterday."

The king repaired to the meadow and checked the haycocks. And indeed – none was missing. However, the king didn't know whether to be happy or sad. He had no desire to marry off his daughter to a country lad.

"Listen," said the king, "take one hundred ducats and come back home. I won't give you my daughter."

"Very well then," answered the youngest son, "only fools waive money. And your daughter, who you don't want to give me now, will choose me herself as her groom one day anyway. I'm still young, I can wait."

"Ahem, I reckon that you'll wait long, lad," said the king and shelled out one hundred ducats to him.

The youngest son took the money, put it into his pocket and thought hard. 'If I bring the ducats home,' he said to himself, 'my brothers will steal them from me.' That's why he didn't go home. He went to the royal gardener and asked him if he could become his apprentice. And he gave him all his money for the apprenticeship beforehand.

A year later, the king commanded to announce that his oldest daughter would be choosing her groom on a given day and time. If some high-born men wanted to court her, they were supposed to

come to the royal palace. The king's daughter was very pretty and the king was going to give her a handsome dowry. Why shouldn't the grooms court her! The princes and czarevitches started getting together to the palace from all quarters.

At daybreak on the appointed day, the royal gardener picked the most beautiful flowers in the garden and ordered the apprentice to take them to the oldest princess. The apprentice took the bouquet, ran to the tower where the princesses lived and knocked on a little window. "Hey, princess, I've brought you a bouquet! The gardener told me to give it to you."

Suddenly all three princesses looked out of the window and the oldest one stretched out her hand. The apprentice pulled out the prettiest floret from the bouquet, threw it to the youngest princess secretly and then gave the whole bouquet to the oldest one. The oldest princess took the bouquet and gave the apprentice four golden coins. He hid the coins and went back to the gardener.

"Well?" asked the gardener. "Have you delivered the bouquet?"

"Yes, I have," answered the apprentice.

"And has the princess given you anything?"

"Nothing. She's just ordered me to come to the square to see how she'll be choosing her groom."

"What would you do in the square!" said the gardener. "There will be all princes, czarevitches and high-born guests there. No, stay sitting at home."

"All right," said the apprentice, "I'll sit at home."

He went some distance apart, pulled out little golden coins from his pocket and started tossing them from one hand to the other.

“What are you carrying in your hand?” the gardener asked him.

“Nothing but some buttons,” answered the youngest son. “I found them on the way when going to the princess. Look how they glisten!”

‘What a fool! He can’t distinguish money from buttons!’ thought the gardener and told his apprentice: “Indeed nice buttons. Let me have them, I’ll hide them for you. If you find some others, we can sew them on your camisole.”

“I’ll give them to you if you let me go to the square,” said the apprentice.

“What shall I do with you,” answered the gardener. “OK, go then if you desire to go there so much.” That was just what the apprentice wanted to hear. He gave the gardener his money and ran out of the gate.

At noon, all bridegrooms gathered in the square and lined up one by another. Then suddenly a rider rushed forward from behind the corner. He was sitting on a silver horse and was wearing silver clothes. The gear on the horse was silver too. The rider rode across the whole square and lined up as the last one.

All of a sudden the princess came out of the palace. She walked along the line of grooms, having a good look at them so that she would choose a man after her heart. She passed all the grooms and stopped only in front of the silver rider. “This one will be my husband!” she exclaimed. No sooner had she said that than the silver

horse and his rider soared up into the air and disappeared in the clouds. What could the princess do? She had no choice but to choose another groom. And on the very same day her wedding was celebrated.

A year later, the king's younger daughter also desired to choose her bridegroom after her heart. The king again invited princes and czarevitches from all countries. In beautiful clothes and on spruced horses, they met in the town on the given day.

On that day in the morning, the gardener picked some flowers again and ordered his apprentice to take them to the princess. And so the apprentice took them and went to the palace.

“Hey, princess!” he exclaimed below the little window. “I’ve brought you a bouquet from the gardener.”

At that moment the younger princess leant out of the little window and the youngest one peeped out from behind her sister’s shoulder. Also this time the apprentice pulled out the prettiest floret, threw it to the youngest princess secretly and then gave the whole bouquet to her older sister. The princess took the bouquet and gave the apprentice four golden coins. He took them to the gardener and was allowed to go to the square again.

In the square, all bridegrooms were already standing in a line one by another, waiting for the princess to come. Then suddenly horse shoes rang on the pavement and a rider in golden clothes on a golden horse rode out from behind the corner. He rode around the square and took his place as the last one in the line. At that moment the king’s daughter came out of the palace and the rider on the

golden horse took her fancy at once. She didn't even have a look at the other grooms and walked straight towards the golden rider. But when she'd come nearer, the rider jerked the golden reins and soared up heavenwards. And so the princess had no choice but to choose another groom. A wedding was held again and there was merrymaking, feasting, music and dancing like at the country fair.

And a year later, it was time for the youngest princess to get married too. The king invited the handsomest and highest-born princes and czarevitches for the bride was also the most beautiful and loved of all his daughters.

On the appointed day, the gardener's apprentice got up at daybreak. He picked an armful of flowers, bound them with silk ribbon and carried them to the youngest king's daughter. The princess took the bouquet, enjoyed it, and then she pulled out the most beautiful red floret and threw it to the young gardener.

Around midday, the bridegrooms lined up one by another in the square. The bell on the bell tower had already struck eleven times, and with the twelfth chime horse shoes rang on the pavement. A rider rode into the square, his horse was ablaze with diamonds and the rider himself was also sparkling that the eyes hurt. He rode around the square and lined up as the last one.

At that moment the princess came out of the palace. She walked along the row of grooms but didn't even have a look at them, and stayed standing in front of the diamond rider. She looked into his eyes and her heart started pounding. "This one will be my husband," she said. But the rider only whistled and soared up into the air. He

disappeared in the clouds like a phantom. Only a red floret fell down from the sky to the princess's feet. She picked up the floret and recognized it at once. It was the very same floret she'd given the young gardener in the morning. And she didn't choose any other groom any more.

"I don't want any czarevitch or a prince," she told her father. "If you really want me to get married, marry me off to the young gardener who brought me the bouquet this morning."

The king got angry so much that he even stamped his feet. He persuaded his daughter one way and another, but in vain. The princess didn't want anybody else. What could the king do? He gave her away in marriage to the young gardener. However, he didn't celebrate their wedding and as a dowry he gave his daughter an old mill. "Go and live as you like," he told the groom and his bride, "but keep out of my sight."

And so they went to their mill and lived there happily. They'd been living there for three years and they might have spent there further thirty-three years, but a bad piece of news spread all over the country. The enemy was going to attack the kingdom.

Having heard the news, all strapping young men with their pikes and swords gathered in the royal town. The youngest son-in-law came too. "I wanted to keep out of your sight for ever," he said to the king. "But if a war breaks out, everybody must go to fight the enemy. Give me a horse and a weapon."

They gave him an extremely long rusty sword and an old, bald, and what's more lame nag so that he would become the laughing-

stock of everyone. “The sword is good, that’s all right,” said the youngest son-in-law. “But the horse is not particularly lively. I’ll have to ride ahead. Just don’t hang around here very long or I’ll run into the enemy and then you won’t have anyone to battle against.”

After that he mounted his mare and spurred on her. The mare slowly started to go. But her legs came apart in all directions while walking, her head was spinning, her tail was swaying from side to side. The youngest son-in-law was bouncing on her like a bag of oats.

He kept on riding till he got to a pond. ‘That suits me,’ he said to himself. ‘I’ll have to water the mare. She’s quite exhausted, poor little thing!’ He dismounted from the nag and took her to the water. But that year lots of frogs had multiplied in that pond. They jumped out of water and skipped around the nag’s mouth that she couldn’t even have a drink.

“Scatter right now, you frog’s rabble!” shouted out the king’s son-in-law. “Don’t frighten my good horse.” But predictably, the frogs didn’t obey. They kept on skipping here and there and croaking: “Croak, croak!” “That’s enough!” the king’s son-in-law got angry. He unsheathed his sword and started to swing it in all directions.

At the very moment the king’s troops arrived. “Hey! You’ve already started fighting, haven’t you?” the soldiers laughed at him.

“Take no notice of that,” he answered. “First I’ll deal with it here, and there it won’t do without me either.” The soldiers laughed ready to burst and continued their journey.

They kept on riding till they encountered the enemy. The swords rang, the lances clashed. The king's troops were strong, but the enemy troops were even stronger. They fought like tigers and lashed into the king's soldiers left and right. The king's troops couldn't withstand the onslaught. They lost their balance, turned their back on the enemy and ran like the clappers.

Then suddenly a silver horse and on it a rider in silver clothes flew down from the sky. The rider cried out, whistled, swung his sword – and the enemy soldiers' heads started rolling down from their shoulders. He killed lots of them and the remaining ones ran away. Then the rider soared up again. He disappeared in a flash and vanished into thin air. The king's soldiers rejoiced, displayed their flags and rode back with music to the royal town. The youngest son-in-law welcomed them by the pond and stumbled after them on his mare.

And in the royal town the flags were already fluttering and music was thundering in the square. The king himself went towards his troops and invited all of them to a merry feast.

“You fought bravely,” he said, “now you can eat, drink and feast for the whole week.”

Of course the soldiers were delighted and paid homage to the king, only the youngest son-in-law said: “Well, you can feast here, but I'll go home. My dear wife promised me when I was back from the war, she'd cook a full plate of semolina pudding for me. There's hardly any better meal in the world.” Thereupon he dismounted

from his horse and made for the mill. The king didn't persuade him. 'I'd have to be ashamed of such a son-in-law anyway,' he thought.

A year later, the enemy raised even a bigger army and marched straight to the king's capital. The heroes from all parts of the country gathered again and with the din and sabre rattling they were getting ready for the march. The youngest son-in-law came too and he called at once: "Where's my good horse? And where's my sharp sword?"

They took the lame nag out for him and brought the rusty sword. He girded himself, mounted the mare and drove her along the familiar road. By the pond the mare herself stopped and bent down to the water. And the frogs again skipped out of water onto the bank. "Croak, croak!" The youngest son-in-law said: "Oh yes, we haven't seen each other for ages, you goggle-eyed fellows!"

Suddenly a pillar of dust lifted on the road: the king's army had set out on the march. The youngest son-in-law quickly drew his sword and started to flourish it in all directions. The king's soldiers laughed: "Didn't you kill them all last year?"

"No, I didn't," answered the youngest son-in-law. "And this year they've multiplied even more. Just go on. The enemy troops won't run away from me. But keep wide awake so that you won't run away from them."

And the enemy troops were already waiting at the border of the realm. No sooner had the king's soldiers come near than the foreign troops pointed their lances, sounded the bugles and rushed at them. The king's soldiers got frightened so much that they didn't even

manage to pull their swords out from the sheaths. They turned their horses round and took to flight. And the enemy troops after them. They would have massacred all of them and cut them into pieces if a golden rider on a golden horse hadn't flown down straight from the sky. His clothes shone like flames, the horse under him burnt like fire and his sharp sword glistened like the sun.

Now on the contrary the enemy soldiers got frightened and turned their horses round. But the golden rider caught them up and slaughtered. He covered the whole battlefield with their dead bodies and flew up to the sky, only a cloud of dust was raised. The king's army closed ranks, displayed their flags and rode to the king to inform him of the victory.

On the way they stopped by the pond to water their horses. "Well? Are you still fighting the frogs?" they laughed at the king's son-in-law.

"Yes, I am," answered the son-in-law. "But I managed to fight the enemy as well. If it weren't for me, the crows would be pecking at your bones now."

"Ha-ha!" they laughed at him. And the frogs in the swamp: "Croak, croak!" – and in one leap at the king's soldiers. They sheltered behind their shields, pushed them away with their hands, but everything was in vain.

"Chase them away!" they begged the youngest son-in-law.

"Oh no," he said. "I'm fed up with struggling for you. I don't feel like fighting the enemy and in addition to that saving you from the

frogs. Fight back yourselves.” Then he got on his mare and rode to the royal town.

When the patrols on the towers saw the cloud of dust over the road, they thought that the troops were gloriously coming back. They sounded the trumpets and struck the drums. And the king himself walked out of the palace to welcome his soldiers. But instead of them he saw his youngest son-in-law as he was riding his nag, all alone.

“Look who’s coming!” said the king. “Surely they haven’t made so much noise because of you! And where are my troops?”

“By the pond. They are struggling with the frogs there.”

“Why with the frogs? And what about the enemy?”

“The enemy stayed in the battlefield. The crows and vultures are just eating their bodies there.”

“That’s the way I like it!” said the king. “My cooks haven’t slaved for nothing then. This time you can come too. We’ll be eating, drinking and feasting for two weeks.”

“What would I do at your place,” answered the youngest son-in-law. “You can’t even treat one properly. My wife promised me she’d cook semolina pudding with butter! Oh no, I’ll go home.”

Another year had passed. And the enemy again raised a huge number of soldiers and marched to the king’s country. The king gave horses, swords and lances to the old and young and he himself became the head of his troops. The soldiers were just about to start marching when they saw the youngest son-in-law running towards them in a rush.

“Why haven’t you waited for me?” he shouted. “Where’s my warhorse? And where’s my sharp sword?” They took out his lame nag and gave him the rusty sword.

And so the king’s troops were riding at the front, while the youngest son-in-law was dragging himself on his mare at the back. He couldn’t keep up with their good horses and soon trailed behind. He hardly reached the pond and there he completely stopped. He dismounted from the nag, bound her to a tree, then pulled out the diamond bridle of his pocket and waved it.

At that moment – it may have jumped out of the earth or flown down from the sky – the diamond horse stood in front of him, shaking his diamond mane and stamping the grass with its diamond shoes. The king’s son-in-law got on the diamond horse, jerked the diamond reins and the horse soared up with him. They flew over the mountains, woods and lakes, straight to the battlefield where the king’s troops were fighting.

The diamond rider arrived just in good time. The lines of the king’s troops had already started to retreat, the enemy had driven them back. All of a sudden the rider set spurs to his horse and fell upon the foreign troops. Wherever he put his sword, the enemy fell down like mowed grass; whoever he looked at with blazing eyes, he ran away without looking back. The king’s soldiers got over, closed ranks again and raised their lances. And suddenly they could see they didn’t have anybody to fight against any more. The rider on the diamond horse had slaughtered them all, he’d scattered them to the

last man. The king approached him and bowed low to him. “How shall I repay you?” he asked.

“I don’t need anything,” answered the rider. “But if you want to do me a favour, give me your handkerchief in remembrance.”

The king pulled out his little silk handkerchief and gave it to the rider. He took the handkerchief, bowed to the king and jerked the diamond reins. Thereupon the diamond horse and his rider flew up heavenwards and disappeared without trace.

The king and his troops rode back to the royal town. To celebrate the victory, he gave such a rich feast that nobody had dreamt about it even in the most beautiful dream. A huge number of guests got together at the feast, invited and uninvited people arrived. Only the king’s youngest son-in-law and his wife were missing. This time, however, the king really felt ashamed. ‘It shouldn’t be like that after all. The house is crowded with strange people and my own daughter and her husband aren’t here,’ he said to himself and commanded to send a golden coach for them.

They fetched them and seated at the table. And so all guests were eating, drinking and feasting when suddenly a bee flew in through an open window and straight to the king. It started fluttering and droning around his head and was about to sting him. All of a sudden the youngest son-in-law leapt out of his seat and started to brush the bee away with the silk handkerchief. The king was staring open-mouthed.

‘But I know that handkerchief,’ it flashed through his mind. ‘It’s the very same one I gave the diamond rider in the battlefield!’

At that moment the king got the message who'd rescued him from the disaster three times. He embraced his son-in-law, kissed him and said: "From now live with me in respect and affluence. I'll make you my first counsellor."

"No, my king," answered the youngest son-in-law. "You've always denied me and now I don't need your favour either."

Thereupon he took his wife by the hand and they together walked out of the palace.

Tři koně

Nevím, v které zemi a za jakých časů, ale žil jednou jeden král. V jeho državách byly husté lesy, rozlehlá pole a tučné lučiny. Všechno by bývalo, jak náleží, kdyby se nebylo začalo na loukách ztrácet seno. Každou noc zmizely tři kopky, jako kdyby se po nich země slehla. Královi sloužící si mohli nohy uběhat, bděli celé noci, ale všechno nadarmo. Chytit zloděje a uhlídat kopky nedokázali.

A tak král rozkázal vyhlásit po celém království: „Ten, kdo chytí zloděje – i kdyby to byl ten nejbědnější žebrák – se může oženit s jednou z králových tří dcer.“

Nedaleko královského paláce žil chalupník, jehož tři synové právě v té době dorůstali. Nejstarší syn, který byl z nich nejvychytralejší, uslyšel o králově výzvě a řekl: „Má milovaná matko, můj drahý otče! Půjdu chytat zloděje. Možná že jednoho dne uvidíte svého syna, jak si vede k oltáři královu dceru.“

„Dobrá tedy, jdi!“ řekl otec. Matka neříkala nic. Jen napekla bílého chleba, uřízla kus slaniny, navařila vejce a uložila to všechno do mošny, aby jejímu synovi nebylo teskno, až bude v noci bdít. Byl to její miláček.

A tak se nejstarší syn vypravil na královu louku. Sedl si za kopku sena, položil před sebe mošnu a začal večerět. Jedl chléb a slaninu a

rozbíjel vejce za vejcem, když tu vyběhla z trávy ještěrka a řekla: „Dej mi taky kousíček. Mám hlad.“

„To určitě!“ odpověděl nejstarší syn. „Myslíš snad, že moje matka nachystala jídlo pro tebe? Utíkej, dokud jsi celá!“

„Dobře tedy,“ řekla ještěrka. „Ale pamatuj: nezdaří se ti, co sis předsevzal.“ A zmizela, jako kdyby se do země propadla.

Když se dosyta najedl, nejstarší syn vylezl na kopku sena. „Tady budu mít celou louku před sebou jako na talíři,“ řekl si. Sedl si na kopku a díval se a díval, dokud neusnul. Když se ráno vzbudil, kopka sena, na které v noci spal, byla pryč. A dvě další, které stály vedle, zmizely také. Nejstaršímu synovi nezbývalo, než se vrátit domů.

Jeho mladší bratr – ten měl taky za ušima – si z něho začal utahovat: „Třebaže jsi nejstarší, nebylo ti to nic platné. Až tam přijdu já, mně zloděj neutěče!“ A šel. Ale přihodilo se mu totéž jako jeho staršímu bratrovi.

A tu nejmladší syn, kterého měli za prostáčka, řekl: „Tatínku a maminko! A co kdybych šel já? Možná že toho zloděje chytím.“

„Co tě to napadá!“ dali se do něho. „Tvoji chytří bratři ho neuměli chytit, a ty, hlupáček, bys to měl dokázat? Nikam nechod!“

Ale nejmladší syn neposlechl. Vzal si kůrku chleba – matka mu na cestu nic nedala – a šel. Šel rovnou do královského paláce a řekl: „Ukažte mi přece ty královny dcerky! Musím se na ně podívat, abych věděl, zdali jsou mladé a hezké. Možná že ani nestojí za tu námahu.“

Král a jeho dvořané se museli smát té venkovské neomalenosti. Ale nakonec král přece jen rozkázal princezny zavolat.

„No tak, líbí se ti moje dcery? Možná že se ti budou zdát staré. Nebo si myslíš, že nejsou hezké?“ zeptal se král.

„Ne, jsou krásné,“ odpověděl nejmladší syn. „Všechny jsou krásné jako slunce, ale nejmladší se mi líbí nejvíc. Vezmu si ji za ženu, až chytím zloděje.“

„Nejdřív ho musíš chytit,“ řekl král, „a potom si můžeš vybírat.“

„To taky udělám,“ řekl mládenec. Smekl čepici, poklonil se princeznám a odešel na louku.

Zastavil se uprostřed louky a začal rozvažovat: „Jak bych to měl udělat? Mám se nejdřív najíst a potom hlídat? Nebo mám nejdřív hlídat a potom se navečeřet?“ Nakonec se rozhodl, že se nejdřív nají. Sedl si za kopku sena, vytáhl kůrku chleba, a najednou viděl, jak kolem běží ještěrka.

„Dej mi trochu,“ řekla ještěrka. „Taky bych ráda ochutnala.“

„Abych řekl pravdu, nemám zrovna velké zásoby,“ odpověděl nejmladší syn. „Ale dám ti půlku toho, co jsem si s sebou vzal.“

Ještěrka zhltnula chléb, než bys řekl švec, a řekla: „Co sis předsevzal, to se ti podaří. Vylez si na kopku a klidně spi. Až přijdou zloději, vzbudím tě, a pak už bude záležet jenom na tobě. O půlnoci se objeví na louce tři koně; dva chyt' za hřívky a na třetího nasedni. A neboj se ničeho, všechno dobře dopadne.“

Nejmladší syn udělal, jak ještěrka radila: vylezl si na kopku a usnul. O půlnoci ho ještěrka škrábla tlapičkou na tváři. Probudil se, protřel si oči a vtom uviděl, jak se z nebe snášejí k zemi tři koně. Prvnímu koni svítala srst stříbrem, druhému se třpytila zlatem a třetímu blyštěla démanty. Koně slétli dolů a rovnou k senu. V tu

chvíli mládenec vyskočil, dva koně uchoпил za hřívky a na třetího se posadil.

Ale co se teď začalo díť! Koně se vznesli do nebe. Nejmladší syn skoro zatajil dech. V uších mu hvízdalo, kučery mu poletovaly ve větru. Koně vylétli až do samých oblaků a zaržáli: „Slez, člověče, nebo bude s tebou zle!“

„A neslezu,“ řekl nejmladší syn. „Mám ještě chuť se projet.“

Koně se znovu tryskem rozjeli. Doletěli až k samým hvězdám a zaržáli: „Slez, člověče, nebo bude s tebou zle!“

„To se teprve uvidí, s kým bude zle,“ odpověděl mládenec. „Vy jste už celí pokrytí pěnou, ale já ne, já se jen držím.“

Nato se koně rozletěli ještě prudčeji. Vznesli se až k Měsíci a zaržáli potřetí: „Slez, člověče, nebo bude s tebou zle!“

„No, já bych třeba slezl. Ale vyletěli jste už moc vysoko na to, abych dosáhl na zem. Až vás omrzí ta honička po nebi, spusťte se dolů a já slezu.“

Co mohli dělat? Řítily se dolů jako balvany z hor. Mládenec ani nemrkl a zase stáli všemi čtyřmi na zemi.

„No,“ pravili koně, „přemohl jsi nás. Ale sloužit takovému junáku jako ty není hanba. Teď z nás sejmi uzdy a ukryj je do záňadří. A jestli někdy budeš mít chuť projet se na koni, mávni jen uzdou a my se před tebou v mžiku objevíme. Jestli mávneš stříbrnou uzdou, přiběhne k tobě stříbrný kůň. Jestli mávneš zlatou, zjeví se zlatý kůň. A dáš-li znamení diamantovou uzdou, pak můžeš čekat diamantového koně. A ve shodě s koněm, na kterého nasedneš, budeš mít na sobě také šat. Sedneš-li na stříbrného koně, stříbrem se

oděješ, jestli vyskočíš na zlatého, budeš se blyštět zlatem, diamantový kůň tě od hlavy až k patě obsype démanty. A neměj strach, králova sena se už nikdy nedotkneme.“ Když toto pravili, koně zmizeli, jako by se po nich země slehla.

Nejmladší syn vyčkal rána a potom šel do paláce. „A teď se ožením s vaší nejmladší princeznou,“ řekl králi. „Všechny kopky sena stojí na svých místech jako včera.“

Král se odebral na louku a přepočítal kopky. A opravdu – žádná nechyběla. Král však nevěděl, zdali se má radovat, nebo truchlit. Neměl nejmenší chuť provdat svou dceru za vesnického chasníka.

„Poslouchej,“ řekl král, „vezmi si sto dukátů a vrať se domů. Svou dceru ti nedám.“

„No tak dobrá,“ odpověděl nejmladší syn, „jenom hlupáci se zřikají peněz. A tvoje dcera, kterou mi teď nechceš dát, si mě stejně jednou vyvolí sama za ženicha. Jsem ještě mladý, mohu počkat.“

„Hm, myslím, že budeš dlouho čekat, chlapče,“ řekl král a vysázel mu sto dukátů.

Nejmladší syn vzal peníze, vstrčil je do kapsy a zamyslel se. „Když přinesu dukáty domů,“ řekl si, „moji bratři mi je seberou.“ Proto nešel domů. Vypravil se ke královskému zahradníkovi a poprosil ho, jestli by mohl jít k němu do učení. A dal mu předem za vyučení všechny své peníze.

Za rok král rozkázal vyhlásit, že jeho nejstarší dcera si bude v určeném dni a čase vybírat ženicha. Jestliže se někteří urození muži chtějí o ni ucházet, mají přijít ke královskému paláci. Králova dcera byla velmi krásná a král jí chtěl dát štědré věno. Jak by se o ni

ženiši neucházeli! Princové a careviči se začali sjíždět k paláci ze všech stran.

V určený den za svítání natrhal královský zahradník v zahradě ty nejkrásnější květiny a nařídil učedníkovi, aby je odnesl nejstarší princezně. Učedník vzal kytici, běžel k věži, kde bydlely princezny, a zaklepal na okénko. „Hej, princezno, přinesl jsem ti kytici! Zahradník mi řekl, abych ti ji dal.“

Tu všechny tři princezny vyhlédly z okna a nejstarší natáhla ruku. Učedník vytrhl z kytice nejkrásnější kvítek, hodil jej potají nejmladší princezně a potom dal celou kytici té nejstarší. Nejstarší princezna vzala kytici a dala učedníkovi čtyři zlaté mince. Ten mince schoval a šel nazpátek k zahradníkovi.

„Tak co?“ zeptal se zahradník. „Odevzdal jsi kytici?“

„Odevzdal,“ odpověděl učedník.

„A dala ti něco princezna?“

„Nic. Jen mi rozkázala, abych se přišel podívat na náměstí, jak si bude vybírat svého ženicha.“

„Co bys dělal na náměstí!“ řekl zahradník. „Budou tam všichni princové, careviči a urození hosté. Ne, zůstaň sedět doma.“

„Dobrá,“ řekl učedník, „budu sedět doma.“ Šel kousek stranou, vytáhl z kapsy zlaté penízky a začal si s nimi pohazovat z ruky do ruky.

„Co to máš v ruce?“ zeptal se ho zahradník.

„Ale jen nějaké knoflíky,“ odpověděl nejmladší syn. „Našel jsem je na cestě, když jsem šel za princeznou. Podívej, jak se blýskají!“

„To je ale hlupák! Neumí rozeznat peníze od knoflíků!“ pomyslel si zahradník a řekl svému učedníkovi: „Opravdu pěkné knoflíky. Dej je sem, schovám ti je. Jestli najdeš ještě nějaké, můžeme ti je přišít na kazajku.“

„Dám ti je, jestli mě pustíš na náměstí,“ řekl učedník.

„Co s tebou mám dělat,“ odpověděl zahradník. „Dobrá, jdi si tedy, když tam tolik toužíš jít.“ To chtěl právě učedník slyšet. Dal zahradníkovi svoje peníze a vyběhl ze vrat.

V poledne se všichni ženichové shromáždili na náměstí a seřadili se jeden vedle druhého. Pak se najednou vyřítíl za rohem jezdec. Seděl na stříbrném koni a měl na sobě stříbrný šat. I výstroj na koni byla stříbrná. Jezdec přešel celé náměstí a postavil se do řady jako poslední.

Vtom vyšla z paláce princezna. Kráčela podél řady ženichů a bedlivě si je prohlížela, aby si vybrala muže podle svého srdce. Prošla kolem všech ženichů a zastavila se teprve před stříbrným jezdcem. „Tenhle bude mým mužem!“ zvolala. Jen to dořekla, stříbrný kůň se vznesl s jezdcem do výše a zmizel v oblacích. Co mohla princezna dělat? Nezbývalo jí než si vybrat jiného ženicha. A hned toho dne se slavila její svatba.

Za rok zatoužila také králova mladší dcera vyvolit si ženicha podle svého srdce. Král znovu sezval prince a careviče ze všech zemí. V nádherných šatech a na vyšňořených koních se sjeli v určený den ve městě.

Toho dne ráno zahradník zase natrhal květiny a nařídil svému učedníkovi, aby je odnesl princezně. A tak je učedník vzal a šel do paláce.

„Hej, princezno!“ zvolal pod okénkem. „Přinesl jsem ti kytici od zahradníka.“

V tu chvíli se mladší princezna vyklonila z okénka a ta nejmladší vykoukla za sestřiným ramenem. Také tentokrát vytrhl učeň nejkrásnější kvítek, hodil jej potají nejmladší princezně a pak dal celou kytici její starší sestře. Princezna si vzala kytici a dala učedníkovi čtyři zlaté mince. Ten je odnesl zahradníkovi a znovu dostal dovolení jít na náměstí.

Na náměstí už všichni ženiši stáli v řadě jeden vedle druhého a čekali, až přijde princezna. Vtom zazvonily na dláždění podkovy a za rohem vyjel jezdec ve zlatém odění na zlatém koni. Objel kolem náměstí a postavil se do řady jako poslední. V té chvíli králova dcera vyšla z paláce a jezdec na zlatém koni jí hned padl do oka. Na ostatní ženichy se ani nepodívala a šla rovnou ke zlatému jezdcovi. Ale když přišla blíž, jezdec trhl zlatými opratěmi a vznesl se k nebesům. A tak princezně nezbývalo než si vybrat jiného ženicha. Znovu se konala svatba a byly radovánky, hodování, hudba a tanec jako o posvícení.

A za rok byl čas, aby se provdala i nejmladší princezna. Král pozval nejkrásnější a nejurozenější prince a careviče, protože nevěsta byla také ta nejkrásnější a nejmilovanější ze všech jeho dcer.

Ve stanovený den vstal zahradníkův učeň za svítání. Natrhal plnou náruč květin, svázal je hedvábnou stuhou a nesl je nejmladší

králově dceři. Princezna vzala kytici, potěšila se s ní a potom vytrhla nejkrásnější rudý kvítek a hodila jej mladému zahradníkovi.

K poledni se na náměstí postavili ženichové do řady jeden vedle druhého. Zvon na zvonici už udeřil jedenáctkrát a s dvanáctým úderem zazvonily na dláždění podkovy. Na náměstí vjel jezdec, jeho kůň hořel démanty a samotný jezdec se také třpytil, že oči přecházely. Objel náměstí a postavil se do řady jako poslední.

V té chvíli vyšla z paláce princezna. Šla podél řady ženichů, ale ani se na ně nepodívala a zůstala stát před diamantovým jezdcem. Pohlédla mu do očí a srdce se jí rozbušilo. „Tenhle bude mým mužem,“ řekla. Ale jezdec jen hvízdal a vznesl se do výše. Zmizel v oblacích jako vidina. Jenom rudý kvítek spadl z nebe k princezniným nohám. Zvedla kvítek a ihned jej poznala. Byl to ten samý květ, který darovala ráno mladému zahradníkovi. A jiného ženicha si už nevybírala.

„Žádného careviče nebo prince nechci,“ řekla otcí. „Chceš-li opravdu, abych se vdala, provdej mě za mladého zahradníka, který mi dnes ráno přinesl kytici.“

Král se tak rozhněval, že až nohama zadupal. Přemlouval dceru tak i onak, ale nadarmo. Princezna nikoho jiného nechtěla. Co mohl král počít? Dal jí mladému zahradníkovi za manželku. Svatbu jim však nevystrojil a jako věno dal své dceři starý mlýn. „Jděte a žijte si, jak chcete,“ řekl ženichovi a jeho nevěstě, „ale nechod'te mi na oči.“

Šli tedy do svého mlýna a žili tam šťastně. Žili tam už tři roky a možná by tam byli strávili ještě třiatřicet let, ale po celé zemi se

rozšířila zlá zpráva. Nepřátelské vojsko se chystalo zaútočit na království.

Když uslyšeli tu zprávu, všichni junáci se shromáždili s kopími a meči v královském městě. Nejmladší zeť přišel také. „Nechtěl jsem vám už nikdy chodit na oči,“ řekl králi. „Ale když vypukne válka, každý musí jít bojovat proti nepříteli. Dejte mi koně a nějakou zbraň.“

Dali mu dlouhatánský rezavý meč a starou, olysalou, a ještě navíc chromou kobylu, aby byl každému pro smích. „Meč je dobrý, to je v pořádku,“ řekl nejmladší zeť. „Ale ten kuň není nijak zvlášť bujný. Budu muset jet před vámi. Jenom se tu dlouho neochomýtejte, nebo narazím na nepřítele, a pak už nebudete mít s kým bojovat.“

Potom vyskočil na svou kobylu a pobídl ji. Kobyla se pomalu rozešla. Ale nohy se jí při chůzi rozestupovaly na všechny strany, hlava se jí motala, ohon se klátil ze strany na stranu. Nejmladší zeť se na ní natřásal jako pytel ovsu.

Jel, až dojel k rybníku. ‚To se mi hodí,‘ řekl si. ‚Budou muset napojit kobylu. Je úplně umořená, chudinka!‘ Seskočil z herky a odvedl ji k vodě. Ale v tom rybníku se toho roku rozmnožila spousta žab. Vyskákaly z vody a hopkovaly kobyle u tlamy, že se ani napít nemohla.

„Hned se rozejděte, vy žabí sebranko!“ křikl králův zeť. „Nestrašte mého dobrého koně.“ Ale žáby samozřejmě neposlechly. Skákaly dál sem tam a kvákaly: „Kvák, kvák!“ „Tak už dost!“ rozzlobil se králův zeť. Vytasil meč z pochvy a začal se s ním rozhánět na všechny strany.

Zrovna v tu chvíli přijelo královo vojsko. „Hej! Ty ses dal už do boje, že?“ smáli se mu vojáci.

„Toho si nevšímejte,“ odpověděl. „Nejdřív to vyřídím tady, a tam se to beze mne také neobejde.“ Vojáci se smáli, až se za břicha popadali, a jeli dál.

Jeli a jeli, až se střetli s nepřítelem. Zazvonily meče, zařinčela kopí. Králova vojska byla silná, ale nepřátelští vojáci byli ještě silnější. Rvali se jako lvi a řezali do králových vojáků hlava nehlava. Královo vojsko nemohlo vydržet ten nápor. Ztratilo rozvahu, obrátilo se zády k nepříteli a utíkalo, jen se za ním prášilo.

Vtom se z nebe spustil stříbrný kůň a na něm jezdec ve stříbrném odění. Jezdec vykřikl, zahvízdal, máchl mečem – a už se nepřátelským vojákům kutálely hlavy dolů z ramenou. Spousty jich zabil a zbývající utekli. Pak se jezdec vznesl opět do výše. Zmizel v okamžiku a rozplynul se jako dým. Královi vojáci se zaradovali, rozvinuli své prapory a ujížděli s hudbou zpět do královského města. Nejmladší zeť je přivítal u rybníka a klopýtal za nimi na své kobyle.

A v královském městě už vlály prapory a hudba hřímala na náměstí. Sám král vyšel svému vojsku vstříc a pozval je všechny na veselou hostinu.

„Statečně jste bojovali,“ řekl, „ted' můžete jíst, pít a hodovat celý týden.“

To se ví, že měli vojáci radost a vzdávali králi hold, jenom nejmladší zeť řekl: „No, vy tady můžete hodovat, ale já půjdu domů. Moje milá ženuška mi slíbila, že až se vrátím z války, navaří mi plný talíř krupičné kaše. Lepší jídlo na světě nenajdeš.“