

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE

A Tale from Guatemala

Once upon a time a poor farmer and his three sons were plagued by unknown creatures that trampled through their corn fields in the middle of the night. The farmer worried that if this continued their crops would be ruined. The oldest son was confident that he could resolve the problem. He brought a blanket out into the field where he intended to stay until he caught the destructive creatures. As midnight approached, the boy fell asleep. As he dozed, the creatures came and trampled more of the family's crops.

The middle son believed that he could capture the unknown beasts that came to their fields in the middle of the night. He too brought a blanket outside where he intended to keep watch over the family crops. Just before midnight he laid down on the soft blanket. Soon thereafter the boy fell fast asleep. As he lay in peaceful slumber the wild creatures returned. They trampled more of the family's crops.

The poor farmer did not know what to do. His two oldest sons were not able to capture or scare away the animals that were destroying their corn. His youngest son asked for a chance to help the family. The two oldest boys laughed at this suggestion. After

all, if they couldn't do the job, how could the youngest? He was a dreamer, and not very strong either. The boy, whose name was Miguel, begged for a chance and his father agreed to let him. Unlike his brothers, Miguel did not bring a blanket out into the field. Instead he brought out a hard backed chair. This helped keep him awake.

Just after midnight, Miguel saw a half a dozen winged horses land near him. As they neighed and pranced around in the field, Miguel used his lasso to capture one. Try as he might, the captured horse could not escape with the rest. When daylight approached, Miguel was surprised to see that the horse was multi-colored, much like a rainbow. Not only that, the horse could talk. It asked to be released. It also told Miguel that it was the king of winged horses. Miguel agreed to let the magnificent creature go if it promised to leave his family's fields alone. The horse agreed.

When Miguel released the horse, it gave him one of its golden horseshoes. It told Miguel to touch it if he ever needed help. That would call the horse to him. Soon after that Miguel left home to seek his fortune. Before he left, Miguel put the golden horseshoe in his pack. Eventually he came to a kingdom where a princess wanted to marry a brave and daring man. She stood on the top of the tallest tower in the kingdom. She held a wedding ring and offered to marry the first man who could take the ring out of her hand.

Many brave knights tried to scale the tower. None succeeded. Many rich merchants tried to reach the princess and win her hand in marriage. None succeeded. The princess began to worry that she would never get married when along came Miguel, riding on a rainbow colored horse that had wings. The magnificent horse flew Miguel up to the high tower where the princess was perched. It did not matter that Miguel was poor. He was brave and daring, just the kind of man that the princess desired. So, when Miguel reached out to grab the princess's ring, she readily handed it over.

Soon afterword Miguel and the princess were married. At this time Miguel returned the golden horseshoe to the king of winged horses, who had more than repaid Miguel's kindness and generosity. In time, Miguel and his bride became rulers of the kingdom. They were fair to the people of the land, and they lived happily ever after.

Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the following tale:

"The Golden Horseshoe," found in *Around the World in 80 Tales*, by Saviour Pirotta. Illustrated by Richard Johnson. Boston: Kingfisher, c 2007, pp. 32-34.

