



Queen Scooter the First

Contributed by Barbora Voráčová

Once upon a time there was a kingdom and there lived a *král* - a king. This king was very young, clever and handsome, but he lived alone, because he wanted to marry a clever woman. And you know, it isn't too easy to meet clever woman. It is just as hard as meeting a clever man.

In this kingdom lived two brothers, one of the brothers was rich and had a cart and the other brother was poor and he had a mare. They travelled together, the horse hitched to the cart, but as the night drew in and the road started to be dark, they had to stop and go to sleep.

During the night a strange thing happened. The mare gave a birth to a foal and the foal went under the cart. When the two brothers woke up in the morning, the rich one was so happy and surprised when he saw the foal: 'I have a foal! The cart gave birth to the foal so it's my foal!' 'That can't be right' said the other brother, 'It is my mare that has given birth to the foal, so it's my foal.' The rich brother disagreed and said that they should go to the castle and ask the king to decide who the foal belonged to. When they came to the castle, they told their story to the king, who listened and said: 'I can't decide who the foal belongs to so I will give you three riddles. The one who can give me the correct answer to the three riddles will have the foal.' And then he told them the riddles. 'What is the fastest and strongest think in the world? What is the softest think in the world? What is the loveliest thing in the world?'

The poor brother went home, where he lived with his daughter Zdenička. Zdenička was

very pretty and clever and she asked her father: 'Why are you so sad, *můj hodný milovaný otče* – my kind beloved father? Why are you crying?' And the father told her the story. 'It's so simple, I know the answer to these riddles. The fastest and the strongest thing in the world is *vítr* – the wind. The softest think in the world is *ruka* – the hand, because if is man lying on the ground, he can use his hand like a pillow and the loveliest think in the world is *spánek* – the sleep.'

The day after in the morning, the two brothers went to the king. The rich brother gave his answers but the king said: 'Thank you but your answers are incorrect'. Then it was the poor brother's turn to give his answers, and in hearing them the king was surprised: 'Your answers are correct, the foal belongs to you, but tell me, are they from your mind or did someone help you?'

'I have lovely and wise daughter, and she helped me with your riddles.' And so the king said: 'If your daughter is so clever, ask her to come tomorrow to my castle. But listen well, she has to be dressed and undressed, combed and uncombed, she has to walk and not walk and she has to bring me a present which is not a present. Will you remember this?'

When the poor good man came home, he was even more sad than the previous day, and Zdenička asked him what had happened. When he told her about the king's request, Zdenička laughed. 'This is a very funny task, please father, catch a live bird for me, and all will be well'. The following day Zdenička was ready. One side of her hair was straight and another side was in a pigtail, so she was combed and uncombed. She was dressed in fishing net so she was dressed and not dressed, and for a present she had the small bird his father had caught in a cage. But the biggest surprise was her *koloběžka* – a scooter. The king was waiting on her in front of the gate and he was surprised and happy when he saw her arrive on her scooter, walking and not walking and he asked her which present she had for him. Zdenička gave him the cage with the bird but as she did she opened it and the bird flew away. The king laughed and recognised that Zdenička was the most clever woman he had ever met. From this very moment they were in love and in couple of days they arranged a big wedding.

But straight after they were married, the king said Zdenička: 'You are wise but you have to promise me that you will never ever disagree with my decision. If you do that you will

have to leave the castle.' Zdenička promised and they lived happily for a while. But a few weeks later the king made a very bad decision and Zdenička was very sad but she kept quiet. She mulled it over for one day, two days, three days, but eventually it was too much for her and she told the king he had made a mistake. The King was very angry and sad and said to Zdenička: 'You broke up your promise and now you must leave. But because I still love you so much, you can take with you one thing from the castle which you like the best.'

Clever Zdenička gave the king some sleeping pills so he slept very soundly. Then she took one carpet, rolled the king into the carpet and brought the sleeping king to her father's house. The following morning when the king woke up, he was very surprised and confused and didn't know where he was. He asked Zdenička, what happened and she replied 'You said that I could take from the castle the thing I like the best, and you are the thing I like the best!' The king laughed and said: 'You are definitely more clever than me, so you should be the queen and rule the country, and I will only be your husband.'

They arrived at the castle together and when they heard of the king's decision they rejoiced in having a wise and sensible queen. And just before the coronation the chamberlain came and asked the new queen to choose a new name, because Zdenička was not a noble enough name in the tradition of Czech royal names. The queen just smiled, remembering the scooter on which she had arrived in the castle to see the king for the first time, and said: 'From this day on I shall be known as Queen Scooter the First!'

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