

# One Wish

As told by Bea Ferguson

**Once upon a time, on a small croft in the west of Scotland, there lived a man, his wife and his mother and father.**

Things had not been good for this family; the land was poor, and the harvests had failed for two years. They had no money and very little to eat. The man's mother has been slowly losing her eyesight and had eventually gone blind, and the wife, well she had been desperate for a family, but they had been married for five years and no child had been born.

The young man worked very hard and had managed to keep going and put food on the table, until the harvest failed yet again and there was nothing to eat in the croft. He didn't know what to do, how could he save them all?

There was only one thing for it – he would have to trespass onto the laird's estate and see if he could hunt something, a rabbit, a hare – anything.

But the laird was a cruel man, and everyone knew that the punishment for poaching was death, by hanging. The young man knew the risk he was running, but he had no choice. His family would starve otherwise, so he got his bow and arrow and set off and climbed over the wall into the estate.

He roamed all day searching for something to kill, and as evening fell he turned to go home with a heavy heart and an empty bag. Suddenly, in a clearing he saw a deer. This wasn't just any deer, but the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. It was white from the tip of its antlers to the end of its tail. It was far too beautiful to kill.

He turned to go away, but then he looked back and thought about all the meat there was on that deer, meat that would feed his family for months.

Reluctantly, he lifted his bow and arrow, but just as he was about to let the arrow fly, the deer spoke:

'Spare my life,' it said, 'and I will grant you one wish.'

The young man nearly collapsed on the spot with fright!

'A talking deer? A wish? What nonsense is this?'

But the deer continued.

'Listen,' it said, 'if you kill me you'll be hanged. If you ask for a wish it could save you and your family. Come back tomorrow with your answer. I'll still be here if you decide to kill me.'

The young man could not believe what he had heard. He thought the hunger was starting to affect him. He walked home, and the first person he met was his father. He told him about the deer and the chance of a wish and the old man immediately said,

'Wish for gold. Gold will solve all our problems.'

The young man loved and respected his father. He thought about his answer but decided to discuss it with his mother as well. She listened to his tale and immediately said: 'Wish for my eyesight to be restored. That is more precious than gold.'

He loved his mother and thought over her answer as well, but he felt he should also discuss it with his wife.

She listened to his tale and immediately said, 'Husband, I love your mother and your father, too, but five years now we have been praying for a child of our own. Surely that is the most precious wish of all!'

The poor young man didn't know what to do. He knew that he could only have one wish – which was it to be? He tossed and turned all night long, unable to sleep with the worry of the decision.

Should he take a wish at all or just kill the deer?

Early the next morning he went out into the estate. There was the white deer, exactly where he'd seen it the day before.

'Well,' said the deer, 'have you decided to take a wish?'

'Indeed I have,' replied the young man.

'Well, name it, and it shall be granted.'

The young man took a deep breath and slowly said,

'I wish my mother could see my wife rocking our baby in a golden cradle.'

And his one wish was granted, and the family lived for many years after that in comfort and happiness.

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