



The Freckled Boy

(A story from Kosovo)

A long time ago in a village, there lived a very bad king. He used to take everything he wanted from the villagers whether they had plenty or not. The people hated him, but they couldn't do anything against him.

In the village, there lived a nine-year-old boy whom the villagers called the 'Freckled Boy' because he had freckles all over his face. Everybody loved him, because he was always so friendly. The little boy had no family. But his best friend was an eagle and it helped him in everything that he did.


One of the king's most prized possessions was his flock of geese. He was always looking for someone to be their keeper. There was one very strict requirement: the keeper must never lose a single goose. If he did, he would be killed. Many people tried to be the keeper, but, after a while they would lose some geese and they would be killed.

One day the freckled boy decided he would try. So he asked his friend the eagle to help him. The eagle gave him a magic flute and said, 'whenever you need help, play on this flute and everything will be all right.'

So, the boy went to the king's palace and asked him to hire him because he needed money. When the king heard him, he started to laugh. He couldn't believe such a young boy would want to try to do the job when all the others had failed. But the boy insisted and so the king hired him.

On the first day, when the boy had taken the geese into the forest, the king, disguised as an old woman, went after him. 'Please, little boy,' he said, 'can I have one goose. My family and I are hungry. We haven't eaten for a week.'





Though the boy knew that the old woman was really the king in disguise, he handed over a goose. He waited until the king had walked a short distance down the path then he started to play on the flute. At the sound of the music, the goose jumped out of the king's arms and flew back to the boy.

The next day, the king again went to the little boy, this time disguised as a poor man, and again he asked for a goose. The boy had another idea. 'You want a goose, do you?' he asked the king.

'Yes, I do,' the king replied. 'I am so hungry.'

'OK. But first you have to obey me. You must kneel down on the ground and kiss my feet and hands.'

Unless he wanted to admit he was in disguise, the king had no choice; so he knelt down to do what the boy asked. But just before he started, the boy dipped his hands and feet in mud. So the king had to kiss the mud. Afterwards, when he was walking away with the goose, the boy again played on the flute, and, again, the goose flew out of the king's arms back to the boy.

On the third day, the king called all the villagers and the little boy in front of him. He told the boy he must fill a sack with funny stories which would make the people laugh. If one of the villagers didn't laugh, he would be killed.

So the freckled boy started to tell the story of what happened during the time that he worked for the king. And, when he came to the point where he was just about to tell how the king kissed his feet, the king shouted, 'stop! The sack is full and you win. Here is your money. You can go now.'

The king had learnt his lesson and after that day, he was a better man.