

One Wish

Story Original: Irish Adaptation

Long ago, a man and his wife lived on a small farm in County Mayo. The man's parents lived with them and because the land was poor, they had very little money. Like every other family, they had known sorrow – the old woman had lost her eyesight and had been totally blind for ten years; and though the young couple wished for a child of their own, in the five years they had been married no child had been born to them.

Despite all the hardships, the young man managed to keep the place going and to keep food on the table for his family, until a blight came on the potato crop and starvation came to their door. He knew it was up to him to save the others, and he decided to go to the only place where there was still game to be hunted – the landlord's estate.

Now the landlord was one of the hard ones. He said that anyone caught poaching on his land should be hanged. The young man knew the risk he was taking, but he felt he had no choice. He took an old hatchet, the only weapon he had and crept over the wall into the estate.

He roamed all day searching for something to kill, and as evening fell, he cornered a beautiful white deer. As he lifted the hatchet to strike, the deer spoke, "Spare me," 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, but though he thought about his answer, he 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, but for five years now we have been praying for a child of our own. Surely that is the most precious wish of all!”

The poor man didn’t know what to do. He knew that he could have only 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?

Early the next morning he went out into the estate. There was the white deer, exactly where he’d seen it 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 child in a golden cradle.”

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