

Peg

A white horse with a flowing mane is running through a snowy field. The horse is captured in motion, with its legs extended and its mane blowing in the wind. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a fence line visible in the distance. The overall scene is bright and serene, with a warm, golden light suggesting a sunrise or sunset.

a short story for English
reading and speaking

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Introduction

Do you believe some horses can fly?

What do you think of ancient myths about flying horses?

Where do these stories come from?

Peg

"She's over there. In that old barn at the end."

The stable boy pointed at the row of stables, and Bill made his way down.

He had seen the ad.

Horse for sale. Low price.

That's all it said. Bill had been thinking of buying a horse for his daughter for some time, so it seemed like a good place to start.

He walked past the first row of stables. Horses' heads appeared at the doorway. They twitched their ears and snorted at him. Their neatly trimmed manes and carefully combed coats shone in the sunlight.

As he continued walking, the next three stables remained empty. Bill got to the last one and peered in.

The inside of the old barn was in near-total darkness. But what light there was flickered off the horse inside.

He stepped inside the doorway, and the horse snorted loudly and let out a short, angry whinny.

Bill stayed where he was, careful not to make any sudden movements and cause the horse any alarm.

A couple of seconds passed, and Bill took another step inside the barn. His eyes adjusted to the darkness and he could now see that the horse was all white.

Its white mane shone in the small rays of light that made their way into the barn.

"What's your name then?" said Bill, keeping his voice low and quiet.

The horse shook its body in response and snorted through its nose. It stamped one of its hoofs on the ground.

The inside of the barn was so dark, but Bill could make out the outline of the horse's face. Its two eyes like black coals.

He took a small step closer into the barn, keeping his movements slow and soft. Outside he had seen the name Peg on a small sign attached to the barn.

"Your name's Peg, isn't it?" he said. He made every effort to keep his voice as gentle as he could.

He slowly reached out his hand to the horse's neck, but before his hand could make contact, the horse shook its mane and stamped its hooves on the ground.

"It's a waste of time going near that one."

Bill turned to see the stable boy at the barn door.

"She won't let anyone near her. We might have to ship her off to the glue factory."

He gave Bill a sharp upward nod and disappeared.

The horse quietened down as soon as he left.

Bill didn't move, but spoke gently to the horse again.

"That's not true, is it? They won't do that to you."

He reached out his hand again, and this time touched the horse's neck.

Her hair felt like silk.

Bill stroked the side of the horse's neck and then reached up to slide his fingers off one of her ears.

The horse let out a loud snuffle through her nostrils and twitched her ears in response. She was quiet and calm under the touch of Bill's hand.

Bill stared at the horse's hair. She had a strange light upon her. Like she was shining. He couldn't quite make out the strange feeling he had, but it was as if the horse was emitting light from her body.

Just then, a fly appeared inside the barn. It buzzed angrily at the wall and ceiling, then dived down to the white horse, its buzzing getting louder and angrier.

The horse let out a neigh and jolted. She kicked up her hooves, and her body rose up inside the small space of the barn.

As she reared up, two huge wings of gold appeared from her back.

Bill staggered back and fell into some hay in the corner of the barn.

He stared in disbelief at the sight before his eyes.

The horse's coat shone under the light from her golden wings. She shook the two wings and sparks of gold and silver flickered from them and bounced off the walls of the barn.

The fly's buzzing rose up in pitch. No longer an angry sound, but one of absolute fear.

It found the exit and flew outside.

The horse stood before Bill and was still for a moment. Her two wings held high above her body.

She looked majestic.

Then, a few moments later, the horse's wings folded and slid against her body, disappearing from view. The horse looked like any other horse again. Just a white horse inside an old barn waiting for someone to buy her.

Bill managed to get to his feet and stared back at the horse.

What did he just see?

This horse was beautiful.

A magical horse.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Where is Bill at the beginning of the story?

What does he want to do?

What does Bill see on the way to the barn?

How many stables were empty?

What could Bill see inside the barn?

What noises does the horse make when Bill enters the barn?

How does Bill react to the noises the horse makes?

What colour is the horse?

What does Bill say to the horse?

How does the horse react to Bill's question?

What colour are the horse's eyes?

How does Bill know the name of the horse?

What does the stable boy call out to Bill when he tries to touch the horse?

When Bill touches the horse, what does it feel like?

What could Bill see on the horse?

What comes into the barn after Bill touches the horse?

How does the horse react to this?

What appears from the horse's back?

How does Bill react?

How does the fly react?

What does the horse do with its wings?

How does Bill react to this?

Essential Vocabulary

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

Barn—*a building on a farm where animals or crops are kept.*

Twitch—*an involuntary action, usually made by a sudden noise or movement.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

It started to rain, so we ran into the big barn for cover.

I dropped my phone, and my cat twitched its ears.

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

Discussion Questions

What kind of horse is Peg, the horse in the story?

How do you think she arrived on the horse farm?

Do you think the stable boy or any of the other workers on the farm know about Peg? Or only Bill?

If only Bill knows about her, why him?

What did the stable boy mean by 'shipping her off to the glue factory'?

Can horses fly?

Are there any old stories in your country about flying horses? Tell one of these stories.

What do you think Bill did next? If this story were to continue, what would happen next?

What was the fly doing in the barn? Why did it appear angry do you think?

How come the stable boy doesn't seem to know about the horse and her wings? Or the other farmworkers?

Credits

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