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Take chances. Keep your balance. Move on.

The Legend of the Golden Duck

Based on a story by Artur Oppman

A long time ago, there was a young man named Lutek, who lived in Warsaw. He liked spending his time telling stories. But one day, he met a poor old man, who told him a story of a Golden Duck.

POOR MAN: Under one of Warsaw's castles, there is a small lake with crystal clear water and a Golden Duck shining in the middle of the lake. The duck is protecting all the treasures hidden by the lake.

The older man paused and looked at the boy.

LUTEK: Oh! That sounds so tempting. Please tell me what to do to get the treasure.

POOR MAN: You just have to fulfil duck's one task and all the treasures will be yours.

Lutec who didn't have much was very eager to find the lake and try his luck. Without wasting any time, the next day he ventured out looking for the lake. He searched the undergrounds of one castle, explored the secretive passages of another castle, and then in the dark spaces of Ostrogowski Castle, he saw glowing gold. All of a sudden Lutec heard a voice.

GOLDEN DUCK: I'm here. Come closer dear Lutec.

He looked around and spotted a Golden Duck in the middle of the lake.

What happened after that was even more amazing! The duck swam towards him and immediately turned into a beautiful princess. The shoemaker had never seen such a beautiful girl before. She had golden-blonde hair and a radiant gold crown with precious jewels. Her floor-length dress was of plush, shiny brown velvet with a white satin under dress decorated with flowers.

LUTEK: Who are you?

GOLDEN DUCK: I'm a princess. All the gold you see can be yours. You just have to prove to me that you can handle all this gold.

LUTEK: All right, what is the challenge?

GOLDEN DUCK: Take this bag with money laying at the shore and spend it only on yourself in one day.

LUTEK: That shouldn't be hard.

With the pouch full of ducats in his one hand and the candle in the other, he found his way out of the castle. Lutec was so excited that he decided to go home and hide the coins under his pillow until morning.

LUTEK: If they are here tomorrow, I will spend the whole day buying things I want. If they are gone, I will know that it was only a dream.



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The shoemaker had many dreams that night about what he might do with the money and he awoke early the next day. He looked under his pillow and the coins remained where he had put them the night before. He then dressed in his Sunday best, and ate breakfast. When it was time for the markets and shops to open, the shoemaker went out into the city. It was a beautiful day and he was full of joy.

As soon as he reached the streets of Warsaw, he stopped by the tailor's shop.

LUTEK: I need new clothing made of velvet with a flamboyant hat.

TAILOR: Here you are my boy. The most elegant clothing in the city.

His next stop was at a shoemaker.

LUTEK: I need the most expensive pair of shoes.

SHOEMAKER: Here are the shoes worth king's feet.

Then he treated himself to a delicious meal at the nicest tavern. While sitting and enjoying his meal Lutek was thinking.

LUTEK: What else can I buy for myself?...A white horse with a magnificent carriage.

In a blink of an eye he was back in the streets looking for a white horse and a carriage. He came to Tom Flyman , the owner of a beautiful black horse and a magnificent carriage.

LUTEK: I'm looking for a horse like this one. I've always dreamt about it. I can pay you as much as you want.

FLYMAN: Of course my boy, if you give me 100 golden coins, the horse and the carriage will be yours.

Lutek paid the flyman and started his ride through the streets of Warsaw. The day was ending and the sun was setting.

LUTEK: It's about the time to go back to the duck with an empty sack.

But he still had one more coin. He was about to spend it on some good cake when a poor man reached out with his hand.

POOR MAN: Kind young man, please give me some bread.

Lutek without any hesitation reached for the last coin and gave it to the man.

LUTEK: You can get a nice meal for this.

Suddenly, Lutek's horse and carriage disappeared. His velvet clothes turned into the old rags. And the voice of the Golden Duck spoke:

GOLDEN DUCK: You didn't keep the promise. You didn't spend all the money on yourself.

Lutek looked at the poor man, who smiled at him.

OLD MAN: You didn't lose anything. You still have a good heart and a pair of hands that can achieve wonders.

Lutek took the advice to his heart, which he followed and got a job as a shoemaker. It was like creating magic. The boy earned his trade very quickly and became so good that he was making shoes for the king and his court. His passion for his trade and his hard work brought him happiness and a very comfortable living. To commemorate this legend, a fountain with a Golden Duck stands at Ostrogski Castle in Warsaw.



THE END



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