

Why Horses Have Such Long Faces



One fine early autumn day, when mother and her two young ones, a filly and a colt, relaxed in a large meadow covered with luscious grasses and dotted with shady trees, the colt saw a yellow furry insect near a wild apple tree. It made a soft buzzing sound. Didn't he just have to have a look? Yes, he did.

He buried his long nose into some leaves and crabby-apples. "Ouch," he screeched and ran, bucking and kicking and snorting. "Ouch. My nose," he screeched in a voice so loud that it frightened his mother and sister, and it even scared him. He had no idea that he could be so loud.

"Ouch," he repeated. Buck. Kick. Snort.

Snort. Kick. Buck. "Ouch." Buck. Kick. Snort. "Help," he cried. Buck. Snort. Mother who had been watching him all along moaned, then called to him, "Come, and I will tell you a story, the story of why horses have such long faces."

"It hurts. It hurts," he whined plodding back to mother hoping she could make the sting go away. He wasted no time cuddling into her soft warm flank, and as the little colt dropped his head, he repeated, "It hurts."

"You have been stung by a bumbling bee."

"A numbling tree?" the colt asked?

"A bumbling bee."

"A fumbling flea?" The little filly said.

"Never mind," replied mother, adding "bee stings smart."

"Why do we need bees anyway?" the little colt demanded, rubbing his slightly swollen nose on his leg.

"Oh my, they are so wonderlous to have buzzing on air and zipping from flower to flower." Mother began, "Once a long time ago, when woodles swam and dipped in alpine lakes, when snow went thump and bump went crank, a long time ago indeed, when sister moon jumped over the cows, and all sorts and manners of jabberwockies made perfect sense, did you know that there weren't any bees or trees or grasses or flowers or berries running deep and sweet red juices?"

No, none at all. It's true, for it certainly was a long time ago, way back when, and we know this for a fact since it was a humble time, a bumbleless time, a bumblebeeless time when kingfishers had no feathers and danced the dance of the swanks. It was a barren time, a lonely time – for life without bees is not fun.

Since there weren't any bees, there weren't any yellow buttercups, or powder blue chicory, or blushing pink petunias. Sadly, there weren't any pleasing smells either.

But worst of all--worse than not having flowers – there wasn't any grass. I mean there was none at all, not one blade. The deer-swifts surely drug their limbs and complained all day long for there was nothing, nothing – no beach grass or bermuda, no bluegrass nor barley – no buffalo or buckwheat or rush or bog. There just wasn't any grass, I tell you – no broomcorn or bulrush, nor rye nor wheat; no grama or gama, no millet or myrtle, or tear grass or tufted or timothy treats. Neither deer nor horse had anything at all to eat, and just as sad -- nothing at all to smell.

Then came the bees marching two by two and four by four. Soon after, magically the Earth bloomed green and yellow and blue and pink and lavender. Now we have it all – ferns and flowers, and fungi and herbs, shrubs and mosses, and grass and grains. We have trees and vines and weeds. Oh my, the flowers are so lovely. So, of course, as soon as there was grass and as soon as there came



flowers, our faces grew long to smell.

Our faces grew longer to dig in the grass, to discover hidden clover, to find every tiny wisp of delicate and juicy grass, to savor each thin blade and take a whiff of wheat, to sniff and enjoy the purple and yellow alfalfa blooming in spring, and to relish the flavors of pony, plume and pin grasses.

Our noses grew long to smell the Earth's smells: the snow and rain and wind. The spring, autumn, summer and winter. The honeysuckle, lilac and jasmine. But best of all, when it rains, the ants tell secrets in the grass. We must have long noses to bury them in the grass and to hear their secrets."

The young one's eyes grew wide as the horizon. "Mother," the filly repeated, "the ants tell secrets?"

"Like what?" the colt asked.

"Move closer," mother replied, "and you must promise never to tell anyone. The ants tell secrets like: deer have dirty ears. Grasshoppers are gossips. And foxes pee in their dens."

By now the moon had been lifted up into the dark night sky, and mother and her two young ones stood quietly under the silver moonbeams which washed all over the rolling hills casting a brilliant milky sheen. The moonbeams skipped and tripped among the tree branches, and slivers of soft light tumbled onto the Earth's grasses. There mother and her young ones stood in silence drinking in the beauty of the moonlight and of the nearby shadows of silver and the hushed breath of Earth. For at this time of evening, the Earth, too, holds her breath at the splendor of descending nightfall.

High up a titmouse twittered in a twisted tree. An owl whooped.

Mother and her young ones inhaled the beauty of the moonlight with their eyes and with their ears and long noses, and they let the beauty enfold them, and they were thankful.

Then they took a deep breath and smelled the wheat in the fields and the sweet



alfalfa too. They inhaled long and hard, filling their enormous lungs with Earth's sweet breath. Waking from his revelry, the little colt asked his mother, "We have long faces so that we have long noses so we can smell, right?"

"Yes," mother nodded and added, "but our long faces aren't only good for smells. We also use them to snuzzle and to nuzzle our young," and with so saying, she gathered her young filly and colt near, and gave them both a horse hug. With her long neck and her tapered nose, she hugged and hugged, first one and then the other.

And so as they slipped away to dream ofbumbling bees and blue flowers and plenty of green grass, mother whispered, "And that is why horses have such long faces."