**Donkeys tale**

Not tail, tale, listen to me!

There once was this warm-hearted village, nestling under the great Alps, just at the bottom end of the big kingdom.

The beautiful village was surrounded with hawthorn trees, blossoming white and buzzing in the spring. An ancient row of apple trees welcomed the visitors, guarding the alley to the centre of the village and giving the most delicious apples one could taste. Gardens around little round houses were filled with flowers, bumblebees and ladybugs. There was always Nettle for healthy gardens and healthy folks, Chamomile for calm minds and stomachs and Arnica to heal wounds. Most importantly, there were strawberries everywhere! In the middle of the village stood a linden tree - an old, most respected lady where people of the village held all their counsels, meetings and storytellings at the end of the day.

The chief of the village was a courageous and kind man, he had two daughters and a lovely gentle wife.

One day the news came, about the newly discovered spring at the far end of the village, under the great rock. There was supposed to be a spring of crystal-clear water. People were curious, so the chief’s wife travelled there to see for herself.

She went there, singing and rocking the empty pot in her arms. When she arrived, a scream was heard across the village and then she came running back to tell them what she had seen…no less than a MONSTER! They could not believe their ears.

“Silence, silence,” said the chief with a strong, calming voice.

“I will go and see this monster. I am sure it was only the game of shadows!” he concluded and calmed them down.

But when he arrived the next day, looked into the giant rock and lifted his arms to scare the monster away, the monster looked back at him, lifting his big arms towards him. He ran back screaming. At that point there was panic in the village. Everyone kept scurrying around; wondering, worrying, whining. The chief decided it was time to call for help, so he took the special occasions piece of paper and wrote to the Queen.

“Urgent. Please send help. Monster above our water spring.”

Naturally she did. She sent her three best knights, all dressed in armour, riding their black horses straight to face and beat the monster. But when they roared the monster opened its huge mouth back and when the horses rose so did the monster. The knights could not bear it, they fled back to the village.

The chief’s daughter fainted at the news. And panic took over.

Not far away lived donkey Bard. He was eating his golden hay, enjoying the day when his big ears caught the words (he hears everything, you know). He heard about the monster, the knights, the panic…And…simply took off. He swung down the winding road, straight into the village. He stood under the linden tree, took a deep breath and called people to him.

“Iaaaaaa!”

“I will go and face the monster!” he declared.

People were surprised but no one wanted to oppose him. Why not, they thought, let him try.

So, off he went, and of course - the monster came out looking at him.

And he…Well, he looked back! For a really long time he looked at the monster. Just looking, doing nothing.

Then he lay down on the soft, herb smelling grass. And the monster lay down next to him.

Then he put his head on a soft grassy pillow and the monster put her head on his soft tummy. And they rested. And when the donkey stood up, he waved her good bye with his lovely tail and the monster waved back.

The second daughter fainted, this time out of surprise! People were clapping their hero, Bard, and when he came back to the village he said,

“The monster is the fear that secretly lives in your heart. Your fear feeds her; this is how it grows. If you befriend it and listen to its story it will reveal hidden powers to you.”

The party was greater than ever. Rosie from the bakery made her special apple strudel and children made Bard a cake - a grand cake of carrots, apples and carobs which he loves the most. They danced and sang until the morning.

And in the morning the people went to the spring. And the monster looked at them.

They bowed to her and she bowed back.

They offered her a sip of water and she offered them unknown secrets of her depths.

From then on, they knew to befriend the fear and understand the situation before running away or acting like a recluse. This was the gift of donkey Bard!