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# Minka and Twilight

— Mindy Upton

*This story comes from Mindy Upton, long-time kindergarten teacher in Boulder, Colorado, who has recently retired from Blue Sky Kindergarten. Mindy became acquainted with Mongolian felted puppets and Mongolian story culture. This story of “Minka and Twilight” is her own creation and was presented to her children as a puppet play. The images of the story speak strongly to our capacity for inner picturing. The children will see Minka and Twilight move through this adventure on their own inner puppet stage.*

Far away but not too long ago, there was a family of nomads who lived simply and happily in the plains of their beautiful country in Mongolia. Deep in the folds of a valley where mountains grew through the clouds and the horses and cattle roamed freely, lived Minka and his family—Momma, Poppa, and Big Sister. Minka helped his Poppa and Momma build their house made of wool. Their round house, a yurt, had thick, woolen walls that kept the warmth of the fires inside all winter long. Minka and his sister had a small bed that was covered with many-colored blankets and furs. A small, covered window was right next to Minka’s bed. So, in the morning, Minka could be the first to see the sun on the horizon; and in the evening, he could see the moon rise from the mountain top before he went to sleep.

Simmering butter tea was served from the fire in the morning to start off the day when the rooster reminded them that morning had come. It was now time to tend to their animals and do their chores of the day.

After slowly putting on his layers of woolen shirts, coat, boots, and mittens, off Minka would go to do what he always would do . . . watch. He would watch as Poppa would gather the oats for the horses. He would watch as Momma would gather corn for the chickens, and he would watch as sister would start to walk over to her favorite spot to call in the horses. This was Minka’s favorite part of the day. Minka would sit and watch as the horses heard sister’s sweet whistle song in the cold air.

Then the rumble and roar of the horse hooves would begin to shake the earth. All the horses would

come running, led by the strongest, fastest horse in the world. At least this was what Minka thought. This magnificent white horse was named Twilight. When Twilight came close, he would always stop for a moment and turn his head to Minka as if to say, “Come with me.” Minka would sit and look at Twilight in awe.

Minka would watch as his sister greeted the horses and served them their daily meal. Then she would gather her blanket and saddle to go for her daily ride. She first put on the blanket, then the leather saddle. “Come on, Minka!” she would call. “Come and ride!” But Minka would just shake his head and look and watch as sister would jump on top of Twilight and start to ride. Off they would go into the brilliance of the morning light twinkling on Twilight and sister. Twilight looked as if he had wings on his hooves. They hardly touched the ground. His mane danced in the face of Big Sister as the golden dust from the ground flew to make clouds on the earth. Oh, how Minka longed to ride, too.

Every day he sat and watched and watched and watched. Every day a small carrot was in his pocket, just in case he would get close enough to offer it. Just in case he decided “yes,” he could ride too. Every day his sister would call out, “Minka, come and ride!” Every day Minka would sit and wait and watch. “Minka, come! Minka, come and I will help you!” cried his sister. Minka would just watch . . .

Night fell and Momma called everyone in for the night. After a day of feeding the animals, tending to the crops and riding the horses, everyone ate heartily and then readied for bed. Minka ate his soup, changed



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to his bedclothes, and took a bit of carrot which he placed by the window. “Maybe,” he thought, “maybe he will come tonight. Maybe.”

This night, different from the other winter nights, the moon was as big as the sky. The sun was so far away. The cold breeze stopped. The snow on the mountain twinkled with silver. The stars sparked a brilliant light through the cold, frosty air. Minka’s eyes felt heavy and he cuddled in his blanket and fell asleep. Lying in bed, warm and cozy next to his sister, Minka heard a sound of crunching, munching. And there he was! There was Twilight, nibbling on his carrot! Minka reached out to touch his warm nose... Twilight nuzzled his nose next to the window and made the window turn warm. Twilight looked straight into Minka’s eyes as if to say, “Minka, come and ride! Minka, come and ride! Minka, come and ride and I will help.”

Minka looked into Twilight’s eyes and deep within himself felt a feeling that he had never felt before... “Yes...” Minka felt, “Yes!”

“Cock-a-doodle-doo!” Was it morning already? Minka looked out the window. The carrot was gone!

Butter tea was served as it always was with hugs and morning kisses, then layers of clothes. Minka couldn’t wait to get outside to see the horses. He never got dressed so fast! “Where are you going?” asked his sister. “To see Twilight!”

Sister ran after Minka as fast as she could. She whistled and there they came—the entire herd headed by Twilight. This time Minka gathered the blankets, the saddle, the carrots and stood and waited for Twilight.

Twilight stopped and waited patiently. Minka knew exactly what to do. He fastened the saddle just as he had seen sister do, and then Twilight did exactly what he said he would do. He bent down on his knees and helped Minka get up on his back. Sister watched, Momma watched, Poppa watched. Minka was on top of Twilight! Twilight gave out a big “NEIGH!” and off the two went into the plains, galloping steadily. And the wind sang upon Minka’s face. ♦

**Mindy Upton** was, until recently, the Executive Director of Blue Sky Kindergarten in Boulder, Colorado, which she founded over 25 years ago. She is on the board at The National Institute for Play and has been an adjunct faculty member of Naropa University since 1980, where she she teaches “Kindergarten Magic,” a hands on course in the practice and application of early childhood pedagogy. Her quest is to nurture and embrace the magic of the early childhood years with love and attention to each individual child.