

# *The Korrigans and the Horses*

A horse trader went to all the fairs; he bought and sold. One day, he bought a half dozen young horses, tied them up at a tavern, paid for them, and left them to chat for an hour.

When he returned to seek them, they were no longer there. The horse trader pulled his hair by handfuls and said, "I paid five thousand fifty francs for them; where will I find them?"

He went along the pathways, but found only good walking; he saw nothing.

Finally, behind a row of thorns, he heard laughing and asked himself who was laughing at him when he had so much difficulty. A voice said, "We are enjoying your horses. Come around the thorns and you will see."

He went around the thorns and saw the horses with six riders who were six korrigans.

"What grief you have caused me!" he said.

"That's true. We are on horse and you are on foot."

"Come with me," said one korrigon, "and we will guide you."

Upon arriving home, the horse trader was about to open the door to the stables.

"You are in a hurry to shut up your horses?"

"I must feed and water them."

A second korrigon said, "This evening, you will lend them to us, because we need them."

When the six korrigans left that night, the horse trader followed them and saw them occupy themselves in constructing a corral. He hardly recognized his horses for the foam, the dust, and the mud. He felt totally mocked and thought, "How stupid I am to leave them with six creatures who aren't worth punching. I'm going in after them."

"You mock me. What a state my horses are in!"

"If you're not content," said the korrigans, "tomorrow, at nighttime, they will again be ours."

"But," said the horse trader, "it's not you who have paid for them; it's me." One korrigon took six thousand francs from his pocket. "Here are six thousand francs. Go home, because you are bothering us; we will return your horses to you when we are finished needing them. You will return the money, and we will give you something for your pains, because they will be very tired. Two nights from now we will arrive at your house, and don't be frightened at our coming. There will be with us six young ladies, which will make twelve, and six horses, which

will make eighteen. You will put on the table a tablecloth, twelve plates, twelve spoons, and twelve forks. You will prepare a plate of food, and you will set a thirteenth place if you would like to eat with us.

When they arrived, the horse trader was astonished! They had on blue outfits as if to go to a party, and the girls were dancing and singing. They dismounted and each korrigan gave his hand to his horsewoman to help her off the horse. They put the horses in the stable and asked the horse trader if their meal was ready.

“It’s ready, but taste the sauce.”

One korrigan tasted and invited his horsewoman to do likewise. When she had done so, she said, “It’s too hot, and I’ve burned my tongue.” “Come here,” said the korrigan, “I will unburn you.”

He pulled out her tongue and cut it off with a knife. The horsewoman was nothing more than blood and couldn’t speak, or eat, or drink; the korrigan was an evil sorcerer. He picked up the piece of tongue in a paper and put it in his pocket. At the end of the meal, he went to the hearth and put the tongue to grill in the fire.

The horse trader felt pity and said, “Apparently we will all be killed.”

The korrigan laughed his contentment. When the tongue was grilled, he pulled from his pocket another paper, rubbed the tongue between his hands and said, “Soon this will be a lovely stuffing.”

The horse trader couldn’t keep his eyes off him. The korrigan went towards the six young girls and said to them, “We will now have a round of dancing, and if you don’t dance well, you will see what happens to you.”

They danced badly. The korrigans become angry: “Let’s chase away these six girls, because we can’t dance with them!”

The sorcerer who had grilled the piece of tongue said to the others, “Wait. Because they couldn’t dance like humans, they will dance as sows.”

He threw over the six girls what was in the paper; they were changed into sows. The korrigans danced and sang, and the sows, instead of singing, grunted.

The horse trader said to one of the korrigans, “Don’t let these girls return home in this state; otherwise someone will capture them and kill them.”

The korrigan answered, “He who did all that is naughty. We are five good ones, but he is more knowledgeable than we, and we have difficulty touching his heart; if one were to speak to him, maybe he would have pity.”

He approached the sows, breathed in their ears and, little by little, they became again young girls. They went home to their parents, and the korrigans their own way. The horse trader found on his table twenty thousand francs and a paper with these words: “You no longer need to go to the fairs; you have enough now to live on.”

J. Frison. "Les korrigans et les chevaux." *Revue des traditions populaires* 29:6-7  
(June/July 1914): 287-89.  
Translated by Susan Oldrieve.