

If Wishes Were Horses *By Dennis Payton Knight*

*If wishes were horses, beggars would ride;
If turnips were watches, I'd wear one by my side;
If If's and And's were pots and pans, there would be no need for tinkers.*

This old English proverb is supposed to teach us the idleness of wishing. That is the point of the tale of a careless and idle street urchin named Aladdin who came to us in *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*. An evil sorcerer passing himself off as Aladdin's uncle manipulates the lad into fetching him an oil lamp with a genie hidden among booby traps in a magical cave. Aladdin and his mother foil the sorcerer and keep the lamp for themselves. The lad makes wishes and encounters adventures along the way before he finally marries right and succeeds to his father-in-law's throne.

Opportunities abound for us to follow Aladdin's successes. For instance, make a wish before you blow out the candles on your birthday cake, and it will be granted if you extinguish them all in one puff. Thank the ancient Greeks for that one because they thought of putting candles on cakes, and thank the Germans for thinking of doing it on birthdays. The idea of making a wish may have come from the notion that candle smoke delivers wishes up to the gods.

An eyelash falling out is another occasion for wish making. Put it on the back of your hand and throw it over your shoulder. If the eyelash gets stuck, the wish will not be granted.

Count every white horse you see and when you reached a hundred, make a wish. In 1890, Alison Utley, a children's author from Derbyshire, England, put the bar higher, requiring a combination of a hundred white horses, a fiddler, a blind man and a chimney sweep.

If a ladybug lands on you, you will be granted a wish. Legend has it that in Europe during the Middle Ages farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary for help with swarms of insects eating their crops, and ladybugs came to devour the pests. The farmers called them "The Beetles of Our Lady" which soon became Lady Beetles and finally ladybugs. The red wings were said to represent the Virgin's cloak and the black spots were symbolic of her joys and her sorrows.

If it is November 11th, catch the clock at exactly 11:11 and make a wish. Catch a falling leaf before it touches the ground. If you drop a book, step on it with one foot and make a wish, but be sure to pick it up with the hand opposite the foot you used. Wish on wishbones, wishing wells, flowing fountains, shooting stars, morning dew, dandelions gone to seed, three birds on a telephone wire, rainbows and green M&M's.

If part of your underwear is showing, make a wish, but then you must fix the wardrobe malfunction or your wish will be canceled. Check now. I will wait.