



ALDAR THE TRICKSTER

a Finnish folk tale retold by
MOLLIE CLARKE



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Once upon a time a man named Aldar lived in a village in Finland. They called him Aldar the Trickster because he was very good at deceiving people.

But there was one man in Aldar's village who thought that he could not be deceived by Aldar.



This man always rode on a very large goat so they called him the goat man. One day, the goat man met Aldar. Aldar was leaning against a birch tree.

“You may be Aldar the Trickster,” said the goat man, “but you can’t deceive me!”

“I could deceive you,” said Aldar, “but I have left my bag of tricks at home.”



“Then go and fetch your bag of tricks and we shall see if you can deceive me!” said the goat man.

“That is impossible,” said Aldar, “because I am holding up this birch tree. If I let go it will fall down.”

“Then I shall hold the tree for you,” said the goat man. So the goat man leant against the tree and Aldar mounted the goat and rode off towards the village.



The goat man held up the tree until he was tired, but Aldar did not come back with his bag of tricks.

At last the goat man walked away from the tree and he saw, to his amazement, that it did not fall down. He said, "Aldar has tricked me, but he shall not trick me again."

Then he ran back to the village to find Aldar and the goat.



On the way he came to a pond. Now Aldar had thrown a piece of old goatskin into the middle of the pond. When the goat man saw the piece of goatskin floating on the water, he said, "My goat is in the pond!"

He took off his boots and his coat and went into the pond to get his goat.



When the goat man had reached the middle of the pond, Aldar came out of the trees leading the goat.

He picked up the goat man's boots and coat, mounted the goat and rode off towards the village.



When the goat man found that his boots and coat had gone, he cried, "Aldar has tricked me twice, but he shall not trick me again."

Then he set off to find Aldar, the goat, his boots and his coat.



Before long he saw one of his boots lying on the road. He said, "What good is one boot without the other?"

He left the boot lying on the road and went on towards the village.



Soon he found the second boot lying on the road. He picked it up and went back to get the first one. But he could not find it because Aldar the Trickster had taken it.

The goat man shook his fist and cried, "Aldar has tricked me three times, but he shall not trick me again."

Then he set off to find Aldar, the goat, his boot and his coat.



At last the goat man came to Aldar's house.

When Aldar saw him coming he took a hare out of a bag and gave it to his wife.

Then he ran off and hid in the garret.



Aldar's wife went to the door with the hare in her arms.

The goat man said, "Is Aldar at home?"

"No," said Aldar's wife, "he has gone to the forest. Come inside and I shall send the hare to fetch him."

She carried the hare into the passage.



She ran to the garret and gave the hare to Aldar. Then she ran back to the goat man.



After some time Aldar came to the door. He was carrying the hare. He said to his wife, "The hare came to fetch me, so I ran home as quickly as I could."

The goat man stared in amazement at the hare.



“That is a wonderful hare,” said the goat man. “Will you sell it to me?”

“You may have it for twenty-five roubles,” said Aldar.

So the goat man gave Aldar twenty-five roubles and Aldar gave the hare to the goat man.

Then the goat man ran home with his hare.



When the goat man reached home he told his wife to make some soup.

He said, "I am going into the forest to cut wood. When the soup is ready, open the door and send the hare to fetch me."



The goat man went to the forest. He cut wood until he was too tired to cut any more. But the hare did not come to fetch him.

At last he went home. He said to his wife, "Why did you not send the hare to fetch me?"

His wife said, "I opened the door and told him to fetch you but he ran off towards Aldar's house."



Then the goat man shook his fist and cried, "Aldar has tricked me four times but he shall not trick me again."

Then he set off to find Aldar, the goat, his boot, his coat and his roubles.



When Aldar saw the goat man coming to his house, he took some silver coins and ran to the stable.

He hid the silver coins in the horse's tail.

Then he began to feed the horse with rye.



The goat man said to Aldar's wife, "Is Aldar at home?"

"Yes," said Aldar's wife, "he is in the stable."

The goat man went to the stable and saw Aldar feeding the horse with rye.

He said to Aldar, "Why do you feed your horse with rye?"



“I shall show you why I feed my horse with rye,” said Aldar.

He touched the horse with a stick.
The horse shook its tail and the silver coins fell to the ground.

The goat man stared in amazement at the silver coins.



“That is a wonderful horse,” said the goat man. “Will you sell it to me?”

“You may have it for five hundred roubles,” said Aldar.

So the goat man gave Aldar five hundred roubles and Aldar gave the horse to the goat man.

Then the goat man mounted the horse and rode home.



When he reached home he said to his wife, "See what a wonderful horse I have bought!"

He touched the horse with a stick. The horse shook its tail but no silver coins fell to the ground.

The goat man shook his fist and cried, "Aldar has tricked me five times but he shall not trick me again."

Then he set off to find Aldar, the goat, his boot, his coat and his roubles.



On the way he met his brother and he told his brother how Aldar had taken his goat, his boots, his coat and his roubles.

His brother said, "I have a large bag. We will catch Aldar, put him in the bag and throw the bag into the river. Then he will never be able to trick anyone again."



So the goat man and his brother caught Aldar and put him in the bag. They tied the bag with cord and threw it into the river.

The bag floated back to the bank. So the goat man and his brother went off to find a long pole with which to push the bag into the middle of the river.



But Aldar had a knife in his belt.

He cut the cord and crawled out of the bag.

He filled the bag with straw and stones and tied it up again.

Then he hid behind a tree. He saw the goat man and his brother come back with a long pole. They pushed the bag into the middle of the river.



Aldar stayed away from the village for two days.

Then he bought ten cows. He came back to the village and drove the cows past the goat man's house.

The goat man and his brother stared in amazement at Aldar and the ten cows.



They said, "Where did you get those cows?"

"Oh," said Aldar, "I found them under the water. There are hundreds of cows under the water, but I could not bring more than ten."



“Tie me up in a bag and throw me into the river,” said the goat man. “I must have some of those cows.”

So Aldar tied him up in a bag and threw him into the river.

Soon the goat man began to shout and Aldar said to the goat man’s brother, “Now he is calling the cows.”



Then the goat man's brother said, "Tie me up in a bag and throw me into the river. I must have some of those cows."

So Aldar tied him up in a bag and threw him into the river.

Soon the goat man's brother began to shout.



Then Aldar took the long pole and pulled the bags out of the river. He cut the cords and the two men crawled out.

Aldar looked at the men and he laughed and laughed. He said to the goat man, “How many times have I deceived you?”

The goat man said, “You have deceived me six times and I do not want to be deceived again.”



Then the goat man gave Aldar his horse and Aldar gave the goat man his goat, his boot and his coat.

But Aldar kept the roubles so that the goat man would never forget that he had been deceived six times by Aldar the Trickster.