

## The Gypsy's Diamond

Once upon a time there was a great famine in Bukovina. The people were forced to eat boiled pigweed and nettles and to make bread containing sawdust.

A gypsy lay on the bare ground in the sun with an empty stomach and wondered how he was going to get something to eat. One single thought really bothered him, but not for long. He resolved to do something about it. He suddenly got to his feet and went off to see the lord of the manor because he was the only one at the time who lived well. The gypsy called the servant who was busy around the place, in the hall of the lord, and whispered to him, "See here, my man. Do bring me something to eat."

"I can't, gypsy, I really can't! The lord is so stingy that he keeps every crumb under lock and key. When guests arrive he serves the food himself and then his hands shake very hard," replied the servant.

"But I simply must eat today because I'm already seeing spots before my eyes," sputtered the gypsy.

"Not much hope for you," answered the servant. "Here there come not folks like you but aristocrats and the lords entertain them only with tobacco."

So the hungry gypsy went off to see the lord of the manor who was just having his lunch. "Why did you come here?" asked the lord, glancing at him.

"Because I wanted to ask you, your lordship: what would I get for a diamond the size of that egg before you?" said the gypsy, swallowing his saliva.

"I don't know. First let me look at it," replied the lord.

"Well, I'd bring it to you, but I'm so hungry that I haven't enough strength to get to my tent."

The lord, expecting that he would obtain the diamond for nothing, sat the gypsy at the table while he himself went off to another room so as not to see him greedily devouring the food. The gypsy quickly drank all the liquid that was on the table and all the solids he put into his shirt for his children.

The lord returned and saw that there remained not even a crumb on the large table. He turned pale but didn't say a word, because he was thinking about the gypsy's diamond.

"Thank you, my lord, for the food," said the gypsy lightly.

"Well, never mind the thanks. Run to the tent and bring what you promised!" The lord couldn't control his eagerness.

"But what did I promise you?" asked the gypsy.

"The diamond—big as an egg," was the reply.

"Aha. But you must have realized that I only dreamt about that diamond in a dream."

The lord gave a groan. As for the gypsy, he ran from the room and only dust followed his hasty departure.