

# THE SLEEPING KNIGHTS

Poland has always been a land of strong and courageous knights. Many old tales claim that the bravest of the knights never died, but have been asleep for centuries in a cavern beneath Mount Pisana.

Once, in a mountain village, a stranger entered a blacksmith shop. He told the blacksmith that he could earn a rich reward for doing a special job, but he must promise not to tell anyone. The blacksmith agreed. The stranger took a gold bar from under his coat and asked the blacksmith to make a horseshoe from it. When this was done, the stranger led him to the Koscieliska Valley. After hours of walking, they came to a cave hidden by rocks and trees.

There was a bright golden light inside the cave. On the floor was an army of knights in full armor, resting their helmeted heads on saddles as if they were pillows. In their hands were battle axes and spears. Along the walls of the cave stood beautiful sleeping horses covered with blankets made of delicate fabric and horseshoes made of gold.

The stranger told the amazed blacksmith to replace the broken shoe of a great stallion with the golden horseshoe he had made. The horse did not get up even when the blacksmith nailed the horseshoe to the stallion's hoof.

Of course, the curious blacksmith asked many questions, but this was all the stranger would tell him: the knights had been in a deep sleep for hundreds of years and they would not wake until the time came for a great battle. On that day, thunder would shake the earth and the sky, giant pine trees would break like little sticks, and boulders would crash down the mountainsides. The knights would then gallop out of the cave to fight for Poland once more.

When the job was done, the stranger led the blacksmith back to his village and made him swear never to tell a living soul about what he had seen. Then, the stranger paid the blacksmith with a bag of gold and vanished.

The foolish blacksmith could not keep from telling anyone about what he saw. First, he told his wife and then his neighbors. Soon everyone knew his secret. However, the moment the blacksmith broke his word, his bag of gold turned to sand and although he searched for the cave many times, he was never able to find it.