

Vermont sculptor and master woodworker

MARK RAGONESE

tells us the fantastic story behind “The Wishing House”

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“The wishing flags and house are loosely on an ancient Himalayan tradition of displaying beautifully colored flags in special places and attaching their most sincere wishes, hopes, and dreams. The people who live there have many stories about mystical creatures known as Wind Horses who fly throughout the Himalayas, protecting unique places, gathering people's wishes, hopes, and dreams, helping them come to reality. I have adapted the story to intrigue kids and adults alike about the Wind Horses, believing impossible things, and the power of hope.”

THE STORY GOES LIKE THIS...

High up in the Himalayas, there was a village and in the village there was an ancient tree, old and craggy. So old that it looked as though it may have lived for hundreds of years. The tree seemed so impossibly old the villagers were convinced that the Wind Horses visited and looked after it. So, they hung the wishing flags on the tree for years. They called it the Wishing Tree.

Everyone loved that tree and would often comment on its beauty and majesty. Everyone except this man who was a kind of curmudgeon who always saw negativity in life. When someone mentioned the Wishing Tree, he would say, “Oh, that old thing. I wish people would stop making such a fuss over that old tree. People should stop thinking it is so special and believing that Wind Horses are real and able to help wishes and dreams come true. I wish the old tree would fall down, and we’d be done with it. Someone could build a nice house there instead.”

His neighbors would tell him to stop talking that way. “If we lost our tree, the Wind Horses may stop coming and where would that leave us?”

“Oh, who believes in that old nonsense”, he would say. He liked saying things like that, to get a reaction.

The story goes on that one day, after standing for so long, that tree finally fell over in a great windstorm. When the villagers woke to see the old tree lying on the ground, they were very sad, as though they had lost an old friend. They also worried that the Wind Horses would stop coming and there would be no way to send their wishes out to the universe. But the one person most affected by the loss of the tree was that man who always said “I wish that old tree would just fall over” because when it did, he thought that maybe it was his fault.

He was worried that everyone would blame him and that if the Wind Horses were real, and didn’t come back, they would blame him for that too. He felt so responsible that he thought he had to do something about it.

So one night, when he couldn't sleep, he brought his lantern and tools to the fallen tree and got to work. He cut a bunch of branches from the tree and started hammering and nailing them together when he had a large pile of them. He worked hard for hours and when he was done, he had built a house-like structure, a kind of square shrine with large doorways on all four sides, large enough for a Wind Horse to walk through.

Then he gathered as many of the scattered flags when the tree fell and attached them to the shrine. He tried to make look as beautiful as he could. He was tired and was about to go home when he had an idea. He found a cloth flag on the ground and held it and wished, "I don't know if Wind Horses are real, but if they are, I hope they like this and keep coming here to help our village." Then he went home and hoped for the best.

The story goes that the Wind Horses came that very night, and when they saw their old friend, the tree, had fallen, they were very sad. It had been such a good friend to them for so long.

But then they saw the shrine the man had made and when they walked over to it they realized it was made of the branches of their old friend and they were instantly very happy that someone had given their fallen friend a new form, a new life. Wind Horses are known to be very emotional creatures. And then they noticed the wishing flag with the request from the man who made the Wishing House. When they read that wish, so sincere and full of hope, the story says they were moved to tears. Not sad tears, the joyful tears the just come out when you are so moved you can't help but shed them.

When their tears touched the ground, something quite magical happened. A brand-new little tree grew from the spot the tears fell and instantly grew to the height of a person!

The following day the villagers woke to find the strange new shrine the man had built and wondered where it had come from. Then they noticed the new little tree that had grown overnight, and they all knew the Wind Horses had come and had left them that gift. From then on, they used the Wishing House to attach their wishes, hopes, and dreams. Years later, when the new tree grew big enough, they made that their new Wishing Tree and gave thanks to the Wind Horses for continuing to come to their village.

