

DULCE RODRIGUES

THE LEGEND OF COFFEE



*This legend was awarded a prize
during a literary contest at European level.*

Author : Dulce Rodrigues

Email : dulce@dulcerodrigues.info

Personal website : www.dulcerodrigues.info

Children's website: www.barry4kids.net

Many, many years ago, there lived in Abyssinia – a country we now call Ethiopia - a young boy named Kaldi. His parents were very poor, so they lived in a *tukul*.



Everyday Kaldi would take his goats to the fields and stay there until sunset. But he did not mind this job; he loved his goats and the quietness of the place.

Though poor, Kaldi was a very happy boy; he had the soul of a poet! He only regretted he could not read or write. He would like to tell the world how beautiful the far away mountains were covered in spring with the pimpernel, with gentians, and other Alpine flowers! How the meadows would become yellow under the blooming daisies! How cheerful the birds' melodies! Kaldi's favourite pastime was whistling cheerfully with them.

In those far away times, Man lived in harmony with Nature and was happy. And so was Kaldi! And so were his goats!

But one day Kaldi noticed that his goats were unusually frisky after they had pastured in a nearby field. He was intrigued, but thought it was a mere coincidence, which had nothing to do with the changing of place.

The next day, Kaldi went with his goats to the usual field. And nothing special happened.

Days later, however, Kaldi returned to the meadow where his goats had bounced and pranced in such a strangely merry manner. And to his astonishment he saw that the animals were again behaving in the same queer way.

He looked around, trying to understand the reason of that sudden energy. He could find no explanation, both meadows looked similar to him! Still, it had to be an explanation!

There it was! A beautiful shrub, bearing bright red berries, which the goats were happily chewing, struck Kaldi's attention. Such shrubs did not exist in the other field! They should be the clue to the mystery, thought Kaldi.

And to be sure of his intuition, he too tried the berries! He did not wait long for the result! A few minutes later, Kaldi felt surprisingly merry and alert. And more than ever he whistled cheerfully, while running after the birds to tell them about his happiness.

That night, Kaldi could not sleep! All his thoughts would converge to one and same idea: repeating his experience the next day!

So, the following day, Kaldi took once again his goats to the meadow where he had seen the red berries shrubs and tried the fruits. Since he did not have any sleep the night before, he expected his new experience to be even more conclusive. He was then not surprised when his fatigue disappeared as if by enchantment.

From that day on, Kaldi went very often to the meadow where the red fruit shrubs were growing. He was careful enough, however, not to eat too many of those bright red berries because he wanted to have a good night sleep!

But as he felt more alert and stimulated, Kaldi decided to visit one day the nearby monastery. Monks reputed for their knowledge and charity ran it, and our boy was to ask them to teach him to write and read.

At first surprised at the appearance of this unusually merry boy dressed in skins, the monks soon and willingly accepted to help Kaldi, though they were doubtful that he would have the energy required to bring about his learning after a hard day pasturing the goats in the field.

Kaldi was an intelligent boy who learned fast, but to the monks' great surprise, however, he seemed never to be tired. Intrigued, the monks asked Kaldi what the secret was of such endurance, and the boy told them about the red berries.

The monks wanted to try those fruits too. Like Kaldi and the goats, the monks felt stimulated and alert after eating the red berries, and it was in a merry mood that they all enjoyed their night prayers!

The part of the country where Kaldi lived was called *Kefa*, so the Arabs, who later introduced the plant to the rest of the world, called the shrub coffee.

The Author

Dulce Rodrigues