

THE ENORMOUS TURNIP

By Kate Stonham

Old Boris lived on a small farm in the Russian countryside with his wife, Katya. He had been looking after animals and growing vegetables for his whole life - but he had never known a harvest as bad as this one...

'Our cabbages, potatoes and turnips - they've all been ruined by weeks of rain,' he sighed. 'We'll have nothing to eat during the harsh winter.'

'Oh, cheer up,' replied Katya. 'Things aren't as bad as you think. There's something I want to show you...'

Boris followed Katya through the mud to the turnip field. Under a tree in a corner, a bunch of green leaves were sprouting tall and proud from the top of a giant bulb.

'My goodness!' said Boris. 'I've never seen such a giant turnip.'

'It's the answer to our problems,' said Katya. 'It's big enough to feed us through the winter, all by itself!'

The next morning, Boris went to pull up the giant turnip. He pulled and he pulled - until he pulled so hard...he toppled over and fell flat on his back in the mud. The turnip hadn't budged.

'It's too big for you to pull up by yourself,' said Katya. 'Let me help.'

'I don't need help,' protested Boris. 'Anyway, you're an old lady and you're smaller and weaker than I am.'

'Oh, don't be so old fashioned,' replied Katya as she grabbed Boris round the waist. 'On your marks, three, two, one...start pulling!'

They pulled and they pulled...until they pulled so hard...that they both toppled over into the mud. The giant turnip still refused to move.

'Can I help, Grandpa?' came a cheery voice. It was Ivan, their young grandson who lived in the nearby village.

'But you're only six - and you're even smaller than your grandma,' protested Boris. 'Besides, why aren't you at school?'



Ivan's smile faded. 'All the children are helping to try and save the harvest, otherwise we'll go hungry,' he said. 'That turnip could feed the whole village!'

'Grab hold of my waist, Ivan, and let's try again,' said Katya.

'Three, two, one..!'

They pulled and they pulled...until they pulled so hard...all three of them just got covered in mud - and still no turnip.

'It looks like you need some help!' cried a bleaty little voice. It was one of Boris's goats. 'You know how snowy and icy Russia gets during the winter - not a blade of nice juicy grass for miles,' said the goat. 'Will you let me help so all the farm animals can have some turnip too?'

'But you're even smaller and weaker than Ivan,' replied Boris.

'Not a problem!' said Katya. 'Put your hooves round Ivan's waist. Three, two, one..!'

They pulled and they pulled until they pulled so hard...oh, dear. Still no luck.

It was Zilya, Boris's dog.

'You have been a good master and now I want to give you something back,' barked Zilya.

'But you are even smaller than goat,' sighed Boris.

'Never mind,' said Katya. 'Put your paws round his legs and let's get pulling.'

They pulled and they pulled...until they pulled so hard...all five of them fell into the mud. And still the turnip refused to budge.

Boris sighed as a tiny mouse appeared. There were lots of rather mischievous mice in his barn, and he didn't like them in the slightest.

'We've nibbled many of your turnips in the past,' said the mouse. 'That's why I've come to help. It's our way of saying sorry.'

'It would take an army of mice to pull up this turnip,' laughed Boris.

'Exactly!' squeaked the mouse. 'Alone, we are weak but together we are strong. My little bit of extra strength may do the trick.'

'Good point, mouse,' said Katya.
'Grab hold of Zilya's tail and pull as hard as you can. Three, two, one...'

They pulled and they pulled...until they pulled so hard...the giant turnip flew out of the ground, whizzed through the air...and landed beside them in the mud with a giant splat.

'What a fool I have been,' said Boris quietly. 'I want to thank you all the best way I can - by sharing this turnip with all the people and animals in the village so that no-one has to go hungry this winter - not even the mice.'