

By the time Alexander the Great was 25 years old, he had conquered Persia (today's Iran). Still known, in that country, as "Alexander the Accursed," Iranian mothers have chided their children with statements like: "Go to bed or Alexander will get you!"

Considered a son of Zeus - making him the son of a Greek god - Alexander was born in Macedonia, in the shadow of Mount Olympus. He did not think like an ordinary boy and did not live his life in ordinary ways.

People still sing about Alexander, such is the enduring nature of his fame and accomplishments. Son of Philip II (of Macedonia) and his wife (Olympias), Alexander was tutored by Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher.

When he was about twelve, Alexander tamed a beautiful black horse called Bucephalas. Rewarding his son for that achievement, Alexander's father gave him the horse and predicted that Macedonia was too small a place to hold the young prince.

Philip's prediction came true in ways that neither he, nor anyone else, could have ever imagined.

But ... how did Alexander tame that seemingly untamable horse? Plutarch tells us the story:

Philonicus the Thessalian brought the horse Bucephalus to Philip, offering to sell him for thirteen talents. But when they went into the field to try him, they found him so very vicious and unmanageable, that he reared up when they endeavored to mount him, and would not so much as endure the voice of any of Philip's attendants. Upon which, as they were leading him away as wholly useless and untractable, Alexander, who stood by, said, 'What an excellent horse do they lose for want of address and boldness to manage him!'

Philip at first took no notice of what he said; but when he heard him repeat the same thing several times, and saw he was much vexed to see the horse sent away, 'Do you reproach,' said he to him, 'those who are older than yourself, as if you knew more, and were better able to manage him than they?'

'I could manage this horse,' replied he, 'better than others do.'

'And if you do not,' said Philip, 'what will you forfeit for your rashness?'

'I will pay,' answered Alexander, 'the whole price of the horse.'

At this the whole company fell a-laughing; and as soon as the wager was settled amongst them, he immediately ran to the horse, and taking hold of the bridle, turned him directly towards the sun, having, it seems, observed that he was disturbed at and afraid of the motion of his own shadow; then letting him go forward a little, still keeping the reins in his hands, and stroking him gently when he found him begin to grow eager and fiery, he let fall his upper garment softly, and with one nimble leap securely mounted him, and when he was seated, by little and little drew in the bridle, and curbed him without either striking or spurring him.

Presently, when he found him free from all rebelliousness, and only impatient for the course, he let him go at full speed, inciting him now with a commanding voice, and urging him also with his heel. Philip and his friends looked on at first in silence and anxiety for the result, till seeing him turn at the end of his career, and come back rejoicing and triumphing for what he had performed, they all burst out into acclamations of applause; and his father shedding tears, it is said, for joy, kissed him as he came down from his horse, and in his transport said, 'O my son, look thee out a kingdom equal to and worthy of thyself, for Macedonia is too little for thee.' (See [Greek and Roman Lives](#) by Plutarch, edited by T.N.R. Rogers and published, in 2005, by Dover Publications, at [pages 135-6.](#))

Thereafter, for the rest of Bucephalus' life, he belonged to Alexander.

Credits:

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