

THE THREE WISHES

A Tale from Sweden

Long ago, in the lush forests of Sweden, a poor woodcutter lived with his wife. The husband worked very hard for the little money they made. No matter how many trees he cut down and sold, it never seemed to be enough. Because of this, they lived a simple life, and often they went hungry.

One day, when the man was out searching for just the right trees to cut down, he found a great old oak. He was convinced it would bring in enough money to buy him and his wife enough food to sustain them for a week.

Just as the woodcutter was about to swing his ax he heard a voice calling from above. It asked him to stop what he was doing. When the woodcutter looked up he saw a wood nymph. This surprised the man. He had never seen a nymph before.

The nymph pleaded with the man to leave the oak tree alone. He said it was his home, one that he had taken care of for over a century. Because he was a good man, the woodcutter agreed to let the tree continue to grow and thrive. In thanks the wood nymph

granted the man and his wife three wishes.

Since the man didn't really believe in magic, he went on about his business. He traveled deeper into the forest to locate other trees that he could cut for a profit. By the end of the day, he was exhausted. He worked so hard that he forgot all about the wood nymph. The man went home where his wife placed a supper of weak potato soup and hard brown bread in front of him. Not thinking, the man sighed and wished for a nice, big, juicy sausage. Lo and behold, a nice, big, juicy sausage appeared in front of him.

Both the man and his wife were very surprised. But then the man remembered his encounter with the wood nymph, so he told his wife all about it. When his wife learned they were granted three wishes, and realized her husband just wasted one on a simple sausage, she became quite angry. Why didn't he wish for gold, or jewels, or a large farm, or enough to eat for the rest of their lives?

The wife berated her husband for making such a foolish wish. She became so angry that she wished the sausage would hang from the end of her husband's nose. As soon as she spoke the words, the sausage moved from the kitchen table to the man's nose. There it hung, and no matter how hard the two crazed adults tried to remove that sausage, it would not come off.

Now, because of the wife's foolish words, the couple had just one wish left. They discussed their options. They could still wish for gold, or jewels, or a large farm, or enough to eat for the rest of

their lives. But if they wished for any of those things, the man would have a sausage hanging off his nose for the rest of his life. What to do; what to do.

It didn't take all that long for the woodcutter and his wife to realize what their third wish had to be. Together they wished for the sausage to come off of the man's nose. As soon as they said the words, the sausage fell from his nose and went back to the table. They never did get any gold, or jewels, or a large farm, but they did have enough to eat that night for supper.

So, if you ever meet a wood nymph and are granted three wishes, remember this story. Do not waste your wishes like the woodcutter and his wife did.

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Twenty-Two Splendid Tales to Tell from Around the World; volume one. By Pleasant DeSpain. Illustrated by Kirk Lyttle. Little Rock: August House Publishers, Inc., c1994, pp54-57.

