

The Three Wishes

One fine morning in early winter, a woodcutter went from his little house into the forest. He spent most of his time cutting down trees. He stopped in front of one tall tree and was about to cut it down.

He was marking the tree and looking at its branches. Suddenly, the tree began to shake and a soft voice spoke sadly from the branches.

“Oh, woodcutter!” said the voice. “Please be kind to me! I have made my winter home in this tree. If you cut it down, I will have nowhere to sleep, and I will die in the cold.”

The woodcutter was almost too surprised to speak.

“Who are you?” he asked. “I can’t see you!”

“No, you can’t see me because I am a woodland fairy. You can only see the tree that clothes me, and the branches where, in the spring, I will grow my pretty green hair. Please don’t hurt me, and I will give you and your wife three wishes.”

The woodcutter agreed to leave the tree standing, so that the fairy could stay there until the spring.

He hurried home to tell his wife what happened. Then he sat in his chair and asked for his food.

“There is only some bread!” said the lady. “But with three wishes we can –“

“Only bread!” cried the woodcutter. “I wish a hundred dishes of good hot black pudding would come through that window –“

He stopped talking suddenly. His wife gave a little cry and dropped the bread. Through the window came the biggest, hottest and best hundred dishes of black pudding you ever saw in your life! The woodcutter’s mouth watered as he looked at them.

“Pick up a dish by yourself!” cried his wife angrily. “One of our wishes is gone, and we only have a hundred black puddings to show for it! I wish they were hanging on the end of your foolish nose!”

“Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!” shouted the woodcutter, jumping across the kitchen. “What’s this? What’s this?”

He was shaking his head because the whole line of black puddings was stuck to the end of his nose, as his wife had wished.

The woodcutter was angry and afraid as he tried to shake the puddings off his nose. She tried to cut them off – but they were fairy black puddings. It was impossible to move them. In fact, it would have been easier just to cut off her husband’s head. She started to cry. The more she cried – the more bad language the woodcutter used. But the puddings did not move from the tip of his nose.

“Don’t worry! Don’t worry!” said his wife, as nicely as she could. “We’ll have a big house with people to serve us, and we’ll have lots of animals too. We only need to decide how much money to wish for. Then we can be happy for the rest of our lives.”

“Live happily?” shouted her husband. “Who’s going to live happily with one hundred hot, smelly black puddings hanging from his nose? I wish to goodness that they were back out the window, where they came from!”

All of a sudden, he felt a strange feeling on his nose. A second later, the black puddings flew out the window and were gone. The woodcutter and his wife stood there, looking at each other.

Finally, the old husband spoke, touching his nose at the same time.

“What is the good of wishing for things?” he asked thoughtfully. “You never know where you are when you get them. Prepare some fresh bread, wife, and we will eat!”

And that was the end of the Three Wishes given to the woodcutter by the fairy that lived in the tree.