



## THREE BITS OF WISDOM

There was once a young duke who was very unlucky indeed. No matter what he did, or how many ways he tried to become rich, he was always on the brink of poverty.

One day, this unlucky fellow went to the king to get some advice on how to improve his life. The king wanted to help and thought about it very hard, but he couldn't come up with a solution and sent the young man home. The king's daughter had been eavesdropping, however. She thought the young duke was quite handsome and that, with a little work, she could help him turn his luck around. And so she hurried after the young man as he was leaving.

"If you marry me, you know, you'll be very rich," she said.

The princess was very pretty, so the duke didn't hesitate. Soon enough, there was a big wedding and the newlyweds were given a large dowry. Finally, the young man was rich! He should have been happy, but he still wasn't satisfied and started thinking about how to become even wealthier. He decided he would start to do business, but he was very bad at trading and one day he realized he had spent his very last coin.

The princess went to her father for help, but the king had given them too much help over the years. He refused to give them any more money, and only gave

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them a small house to live in on the edge of town.

They needed money, so the princess decided she would get a job like the normal people did. She worked as hard as anyone, learning how to work on a loom she'd borrowed from her neighbours, and soon she was weaving the prettiest fabric in the county. Every day she would fold the beautiful fabric as neatly as possible, wrap it in a linen bag, and send her husband to town to sell it.

One day, the man went to the nearest town and offered to sell the fabric to a tailor. "I can give you a few coins for it," the tailor said, "or I can give you a piece of good advice. You choose." The young man was about to stretch out his hand to take the coins, but suddenly he remembered that as soon as he had money in his possession he would be sure to spend it too fast. He couldn't hold onto money, but he could probably hold onto some good advice!

"Alright... I will take your advice," the young man said.

"Where there are willows, there is also water," the salesman said, taking the fabric. The young man had no idea what it meant, but he thought it must mean something valuable.

When he got home home, the princess was awaiting him eagerly, curious to know how much money he'd gotten for her beautiful fabric. When she learned that he'd exchanged her work for a few nonsense words, she got very upset.

"We can't buy food with words!" she said. She went back to her weaving, and the next day gave her husband more fabric to sell, reminding him this time that he had to sell it for money. He took it to the same salesman, who once again offered him good advice instead of money again. The young man agreed, completely forgetting what his wife had told him, and the salesman said, "If you want peace, arguments won't get it."

Once again, the young man had no idea what it meant, but was proud to possess such valuable words. When he came back home without any money a second time, his wife told him off properly. She started making fabric again and told her husband that if he didn't sell it for money this time, he shouldn't come back home at all.

The young man went back to the salesman the next day, but this time he

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remembered his wife's words. He didn't want advice for the fabric, he said – just money!

“But without the third bit,” the salesman said, “the rest of the advice will be useless!”

The young man thought long and hard. He knew he needed to get the money, but he really wanted to know what the last piece of advice was! Finally, he agreed that he would take the advice.

“Do not stab with your sword before you're sure,” the salesman said. This made no sense to the poor young man, and so he gave the third piece of fabric to the salesman and, knowing he couldn't go home, went to the port to become a sailor and make some money that way.

He sailed the high seas for several years, working hard with the other sailors. After a long journey, the boat anchored close to an island that was full of soldiers. The soldiers were all exhausted and thirsty because nobody could find fresh water on the island, and the general, desperate for help, announced that whoever could find water for his troops would get paid his weight in gold. Suddenly the young duke remembered the salesman's first piece of advice: Where there are willows, there's also water. And so, he went ashore to look for willow trees.

The young man wandered all over the island and was starting to lose hope when, suddenly, he saw willow trees! He started digging and soon freshwater started splashing out of the ground. He'd found a spring! The water went so high, the soldiers could see it from very far away. They whooped and hollered happily and ran toward the spring to finally quench their thirst. The general was a man of his word and immediately gave the young man his weight in gold.

The next day, the ship set off again. The young man was very proud of himself and was determined to bring the gold home to his wife to prove that he was not as foolish as she believed, but the sailors decided they would steal the gold and share it amongst themselves.

One night, while he was sleeping, they threw him overboard into the sea. The poor fellow couldn't swim and he started sinking quickly. He sank and sank until he reached the deep sea kingdom of the water goblin Ahti. The goblin wasn't a

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bad sort and rescued the drowning duke, but had two sons who fought all the time and he simply didn't know how to reconcile them.

"If you can get my sons to make up," the goblin said, "I will bring you back to the ground alive and I'll even throw in ten barrels full of gold coins." The young man hesitated – he'd never had to convince two water goblins to stop fighting before – but then he remembered the second piece of advice from the salesman. If you want peace, he'd said, arguments won't get it.

In his calmest voice, he advised the goblin's sons to let go of their old grievances and shake hands. They were very stubborn, but they were also very tired of fighting, and so they shook hands and agreed to forget about their arguments. Their father was overjoyed. He gave the young man ten barrels of gold and brought him right back up to the boat. You can imagine how shocked the other sailors were to see him again! He was quite wet, but somehow he was alive and had even more gold with him! After that, they never dared to touch him again and gave him back all the gold they'd stolen.

It was another year at least before the boat came back to the young man's home port, and as soon as the boat docked he hurried home to his wife. He'd managed to keep all the gold he had earned, so he bought a horse and a carriage and drove home to his house. It was dark when he arrived, and when he walked in he saw that there was someone else lying next to his wife in bed! He had been gone for so long, he thought, that she must have thought he'd died and gotten remarried! He whipped out his sword, ready to challenge the interloper, but suddenly he remembered the third piece of advice from the salesman: Do not stab with your sword before you're sure. And so, instead, he quietly woke up his wife. She was ecstatic to see him, and as soon as she lit a candle he could see that there was no man sleeping next to her; it was a young boy – his son!

And so they celebrated his return home and the end of his bad luck, and they lived happily ever after.