



THE THREE SILLIES

Once upon a time there was a farmer who lived with his wife and beautiful daughter. One day a traveller was passing by when he saw the lovely girl and fell in love. The girl fell for the young lad as well, and the happy family invited him for dinner.

When the table was set and dinner was cooked, the farmer sent his daughter to fetch some beer from the cellar. The girl opened the heavy wooden door and went downstairs into the cold room.

While she was drawing the beer into a jug, she looked up at the ceiling and noticed that there was an axe stuck in a beam. How long has that axe been there? She thought. I've never seen it before. Who could have left it here?

Suddenly it struck her how dangerous it was to have an axe stuck in a ceiling. What if I marry the young man upstairs and we have a son? And then one day when he is older, we will surely send him to the cellar for beer, and the axe will fall and hurt him!

A long time passed and the girl still hadn't returned from the cellar, so the young man and her parents began to wonder what could possibly be taking her so long. Finally her mother got up and went into the cellar to look for her. She found her daughter sitting on a wooden bench, weeping silently while the beer flowed from the barrel and splashed all over the floor. The mother was very

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startled and a little worried, and she asked what had happened. The girl pointed at the axe in the wooden beam. She didn't need to say another word; immediately, her mother pictured all the terrible things that could happen and began to weep. When the mother also didn't return, the two men began to get very curious about what could be taking the women so long in the cellar. Finally the farmer couldn't stand it any longer and he went to see what was going on. The beer was still flowing from the barrel onto the floor, and the girl and her mother were sitting on the bench and crying. The sight scared the farmer and he asked what had happened. The two women pointed at the axe in the beam. No more words were necessary. At once the farmer vividly pictured all the horrors and misfortunes that could strike them with that one axe.

Meanwhile, the young lad was sitting alone in the kitchen. It had been a while since everyone went downstairs, and the dinner had gotten cold. Finally he decided to follow them down to the cellar to see what exactly was happening there. He was horrified when he got downstairs and saw all three of them sitting on the bench, their feet in a puddle of beer, crying their eyes out.

"What in the world happened down here?" he asked.

They pointed at the axe and, when he didn't understand, told him all the terrible things that might happen because of the axe in the ceiling. Then their crying turned into proper wailing.

The young man couldn't hold back his laughter and he roared until his belly hurt. When he finally stopped laughing, he walked over to the axe, pulled it out of the ceiling, and put it on the bench.

"See? All the dangers are now averted," he said. "I must say, I've travelled many lands and met many people, but I have never met anyone as silly as you three. I'm going to set out again, and if I can find three fools sillier than you, I will return and marry your daughter." And so he went back upstairs and left, shutting the door behind him.

After a lot of walking, the traveller came across a house in the middle of nowhere. The roof was covered with grass, and there was a woman in front of the house trying to make a cow climb a ladder onto the roof.

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“Excuse me ma’am,” the young man said. “Can I ask what you’re doing?”

“I’m trying to get Bessie to go up to the roof for lunch!” she replied. “Look at all the sweet grass! There’s no better food for her. I just need to get her up there.”

“How will you keep her from falling?” the young man asked.

“If I can get her up there,” the woman responded, “I’m going to put a rope around her neck, throw the other end down the chimney, and tie it to my hand. That way Bessie will be safe and won’t take a tumble while she’s eating.”

The traveller couldn’t believe his ears, so he stayed and watched until the woman finally managed to push the cow up onto the roof. The cow mooed happily and began to graze, and the young man, amused by what he’d seen, whistled merrily and headed back to the road. But before he could get too far, he heard a terribly loud crash! The cow had fallen off the roof, and because it was tied to the woman’s wrist, it tugged her up the chimney!

Oh, I have never seen anyone sillier! thought the young man.

He walked and walked until he reached an inn. The guests inside were feasting and celebrating, but the young traveller was too exhausted to join the festivities. He found the innkeeper and paid for a room, then took the key and headed upstairs. His room was in the attic, but he got lost going up the dark staircase. When he finally found his bed, he lay down and immediately fell asleep. He slept until morning, when a rooster crowed in the yard and woke him up.

After he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, he noticed there was another man sleeping in his room.

The inn was probably full, he thought. There must not have been enough rooms for everyone to sleep, so we’re sharing.

When the stranger woke up, he immediately started moving chairs around the room. The young man watched him, completely confused about what the man was doing. The stranger dragged the chairs around until they were next to each other with a wide gap between them, and then he picked up his breeches with suspenders and hung them on the chairs, one strap over each. Then he took a few steps back, broke into a run and jumped.

The man was obviously trying to jump into his breeches, but of course he fell on

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the ground instead. He didn't give up, though, and tried again. He darted towards the chairs, then leaped off the floor. He missed again. Scraped and scratched, he picked himself up, put the breeches back on the chairs and jumped one more time. The traveller couldn't watch this happen any longer without laughing, and so he asked the man what it was he was doing.

"Well," the stranger said, "I don't know who the clever fellow is who invented breeches, but every single morning it takes me at least an hour to get them on!"

The young man couldn't help but burst out laughing. He'd never heard anything so silly in his whole life! He showed the man how to put them on properly. He couldn't believe he'd already met two people sillier than the farmer and his family. Soon enough he was back on the road, whistling merrily, with a knapsack over his shoulder. As the sun set and the sky darkened, he arrived at a lake. Far off in the distance, he could see a crowd of people from a nearby village running around and trying to pull something out of the water. He quickly rushed to help them, but when he got closer he saw the strangest scene. They all had rakes in their hands and were frantically raking the surface of the lake.

"Excuse me," he said. "What is it, exactly, that you're doing?"

"The moon's fallen in the water!" they cried out. "We're trying to get it out!"

The young man looked at the moon's reflection on the surface of the pond, then at the moon up in the sky. He tried to explain to the villagers that the moon hadn't, in fact, fallen into the pond, and that it was simply a reflection, but no matter what he said the villagers simply couldn't understand.

This is a whole village of sillies! He thought to himself. He suddenly felt very happy – he had found so many people who were even sillier than the farmer's family! The young man spent the night in the village and, early the next morning, he turned back toward the farm so he could marry the lovely (and wonderfully silly!) farmer's daughter.