

The Ash Lad Who Had an Eating Match with the Troll.

Adapted by Mistress Dervila ni Leanon

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 348

Norwegian

Time: About 4:22

Once there was a poor farmer who had three sons. The sons did no work, and were their father's despair. Finally he told the eldest

"If you want to eat, you must work. Go and chop wood in the forest that we may sell it." The boy saw his father was serious, so out he went with the ax in his hand. But he hadn't been chopping long when an enormous troll came running out of the forest and yelled

[shake fist] "I'll kill you if you chop down my trees!" The boy ran home as fast as he could, yelling and screaming about the troll in the woods. Once he got to the house, he wouldn't even stick his nose out of the door. The father saw the boy was useless, so he told his second son

"If you want to eat, you must work. Go and chop wood in the forest that we may sell it." The boy saw his father was serious, so out he went with the ax in his hand. But he hadn't been chopping long when an enormous troll came running out of the forest and yelled

[shake fist] "I'll kill you if you chop down my trees!" The boy ran home as fast as he could, yelling and screaming about the troll in the woods. Once he got to the house, he wouldn't even stick his nose out of the door. The father saw that boy was useless too, so he gave up in despair.

Then the youngest, the Ash Lad, said

"I will chop wood in the forest, father. I'm not afraid of trolls."

"Good! See, boys, your brother is not afraid!"

"Oh, but he will be!" answered the two other boys.

But the Ash Lad paid them no attention. Before he left, he asked his mother for some food, and she gave him a fresh, soft cheese. He put the cheese in his knapsack, picked up the ax, and went out to the forest. But he hadn't been chopping long when the troll came running out of the forest and yelled

[shake fist] "I'll kill you if you chop down my trees!" The Ash Lad ran over to his knapsack, grabbed the cheese and yelled back

"Don't make me angry, or I'll squeeze the blood from your heart just like I squeeze water from this stone!" *[squeeze hand]* And he squeezed the cheese so that water ran from it.

[back up, afraid] "N-no, no, please don't hurt me! Cut down all the trees you want! And let me help!" They chopped down trees all day, and the troll was very good at it. As the sun set the troll said

"We're closer to my house than yours, let's go there for dinner." When they got to the troll's house, he said

"I'll light the fire, and you fetch water for the porridge." And the troll pointed to two huge iron buckets that no man could on earth lift. The Ash Lad said

"What! No use taking those two little thimbles - I'll bring back the whole well!"

[alarmed] "No, no! I can't lose my well! You light the fire, I'll fetch the water!"

As they sat down to eat, the Ash Lad said

“Why don’t we have an eating contest?”

[big smile] “An eating contest! What a wonderful idea!” The troll was certain he could beat the Ash Lad in an eating contest. But the Ash Lad had his knapsack on under his shirt with its back next to his belly. So as they ate, he dumped more porridge in the knapsack than he put into his mouth. When the knapsack was bulging full, he took his knife and cut it open.

[troll’s eyes as wide as saucers] “What - How - That is - ”

[shrug] “I cut my stomach open so I could eat more. You should do the same.”

“Doesn’t it hurt?”

“Not much”

The troll did as the Ash Lad said, and that was the end of him. The Ash Lad searched the troll’s house and found a great deal of silver and gold. He took it all - in several trips - and no one in his family ever had to work again.

Full bibliography of source:

*Yolen, Jane, editor. Favorite Folktales from Around the World. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
ISBN: 0-394-75188-4*

Copyright Amerie Helton 2013. For personal non-profit use only. This story may be published in SCA newsletters on the condition that they are published in their entirety with this copyright notice.

If you tell this version of the story, please give me credit. If you change it significantly, then it’s yours