

SCA Stories for Beginners

By Mistress Dervila ni Leanon

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This article is a companion to the CD “SCA Stories for Beginners”

These stories are written as I would tell them. If you find the originals, you will find my versions very different. So you don’t have to follow my version any more than I followed the originals - in fact, it would be better if you didn’t, if you made them your own. They are meant only as examples. If you don’t change them significantly, please give me credit. Say something like “I got this story from Mistress Dervila, a storyteller from Atlantia” (You don’t have to tackle my last name, which can be hard to say)

The time is how long it takes me to tell the story. Your milage may vary. The italicized phrases in square brackets are like stage directions. I am a very kinetic storyteller; I move about a lot. If that’s not your style, you should drop the stage directions. Or you can drop or change the stage directions if you like. If you do remove the stage directions, you might need to tell the audience what’s going on, since you’re not showing them.

And remember, if you’re not having fun, you’re not doing it right.

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English Stories

King John and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A version of this story is on pg. 29 of Favorite Folktales from Around the World

Time: 2:29

The Archbishop of Canterbury was a good man, and beloved by all who knew him. King John was.....not such a good man, and disliked by all who knew him. King John came to hate the Archbishop. So the King summoned the Archbishop before him and said

“In one week I will ask you three questions. If you do not answer them correctly, I will have you beheaded. Now go!”

And so the Archbishop went back to his home, bewailing his fate. He went into the church and prayed. The sexton, who took care of the church, noticed how upset the Archbishop was.

“What is wrong, Your Grace?” And the Archbishop told him, and the sexton said

“Lend me your clothes and I will go instead of you. Better that a humble sexton die than Your Grace.” So one week later the disguised sexton stood before King John.

[evil smile] King John asked,

[draw it out] “So, How long would it take me, mounted on my best horse, to travel around the world?”

“Simply keep pace with the sun and it will only take you one day.”

[upset] “What! *[pause]* How many stars are in the sky?”

“As many as there are grains of sands on the beach. Count the one and you’ll know the other.”

[angry] “Rrrrr....Very well, then! What am I thinking?”

“Why, you’re thinking that I’m the Archbishop of Canterbury, when actually I’m the sexton of the church.”

[flabbergasted] “What....Why...I.... *[recovers, happy]* Well, then, as it seems is as it shall be! You shall be the Archbishop and he shall be the sexton!” And so King John satisfied his hatred of the Archbishop.

The Peddler of Swaffhem

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World page 414.

Time: 2:32

The peddler woke up that morning and shook his wife awake.

[Excited] “Wife, wife, I have just had a dream!”

[Groggy] “So? Many people have dreams when they sleep.”

“But this is the third night in a row I have had this dream!”

[Big sigh.] “So what was this dream of yours?”

“I dreamt that if I went to London bridge I would find a great treasure!”

“Why did you wake me up for this?”

“To tell you that I am going to London bridge.”

“London? But it is so far away!”

“Which is why I’m leaving right away!” And the peddler was as good as his word. It took him three days to walk from his home in Swaffhem to London bridge, but when he got there, *[pause, show confusion]* he didn’t know what to do. The bridge was guarded, and he had no idea where to look for his treasure. After he had been there for three days, a guard walked up to him.

“I’ve seen you here for three days now, neither selling goods nor begging alms. What are you doing here?”

[Feeling slightly foolish, hang head slightly, speaks hesitantly] “Um - I dreamt that if I came to London bridge I would find a great treasure.”

[Laughing] “Foolish man! Why, I dreamt three nights in a row about treasure, too. I dreamt that it was under an oak tree in front of the house of a peddler in Swaffhem. But you don’t see me making that long journey! There is no treasure here, go home and don’t follow dreams anymore.”

[Really? Cool! Beaming] “Thank you, kind sir, for your excellent advice.” As soon as he got home he dug beneath the great oak in front of his house and found a chest full of treasure. He was a generous man, and the people of the town profited from the peddler’s treasure as much as the peddler himself. So they put up a statue of the peddler, with his sack on his back and his little dog following. And it has stood there from that day to this.

Finnish Stories

The King's Son Goes Bear Hunting.

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 155

Time: 3:32

One day a peasant became very angry with his horse while plowing. He yelled "May a bear devour you!" It just so happened that a bear heard the peasant. The bear lumbered up to the peasant and said

"Here I am. Give me the horse"

[indignant] "What! I need this horse to do my plowing! I'm not about to give it to you!"

[spread hand] The bear showed its claws.

"You said you wanted a bear to devour your horse. Were you lying? I eat liars too."

[Terrified] "But - I - Please, let me finish my day's plowing!"

"Mmmmmm - very well. But I'll wait right here at the edge of your field. So don't try to run away."

So the peasant went back to plowing, and became sadder and sadder as the sun went down. A fox happened by and said

[female voice] "You look miserable! What's your trouble?"

The peasant told her, and she said

"What will you give me if I rescue your horse?"

"Four fat hens!"

"Done! I'll tie a bell to my neck and run through the forest. When you hear me, tell the bear that the king's son is out bear hunting."

She did as she said, and the peasant ran to the bear.

"Do you hear that bell? That's the king's son out bear hunting! Run while you can!"

"You can't fool me. I'm not--"

[Gruff female voice, yelling] "Is that a bear I see?"

[Bear] "Please don't give me to the hunters! I promise not to eat you or your horse! Say I'm a stump!"

[Peasant to fox, yelling] "No, it's just a stump!"

[From here on, the fox "yells" and the bear "whispers"]

[Fox] "If it's a stump, why not throw it down?"

[Bear] "Throw me down!" So the peasant pushed him over.

[Fox] "Why don't you put it on the sleigh?"

[Bear] "Put me on the sleigh!" And the peasant did.

[Fox] "Why don't you fasten it? Otherwise it will roll off!"

[Bear] "Fasten me, but loosely." But the peasant fastened the bear very firmly to the sleigh.

[Fox] "Why don't you take an ax to it?"

[Bear] "No, no, please don't hurt me", and the bear begged and the bear pleaded but the peasant killed him with the ax. Then the fox ran up and said

"Now for my payment!"

"Wait right here." said the peasant. And he came back with a full sack.

[bend over slightly] “Here they are. Just climb into the sack. I don’t want to let them out.” The fox crawled in, but the sack was full of straw, and the peasant tied the sack shut and beat the fox.

[Laughing] “And so I keep both my horse and my hens!” The fox chewed her way out of the sack and said

“Next time, I’ll help the bear.”

French Stories

Reynard the Fox and the Fishermen

Based on A Harvest of World Folktales, page 304

Time: 2:00

Reynard the fox was starving! He had been hunting for three days, and found nothing, not even a mouse. He knew his wife and children were hungry too, so he kept on hunting, but still he found nothing. He was crossing the road when he smelled fresh fish.

“So, fishermen are near, *[snif sniff]* and with a good catch. I must fool them somehow so I can get some fish.” He thought a minute, then lay down stretched out and stiff in the muddy road.

When the fishermen walked up, one of them saw him, and said

“Look! A dead fox in the road! Fortune smiles on us, brothers, it’s Reynard the fox! Now our hens are safe! I’ll tan his skin so that his own mother wouldn’t recognize him.” And he threw the fox into the cart with the fish. As the fishermen walked along, another fisherman said to the first

“I’ll give you thirty herrings for the fox. His skin will look very good on my wife’s shoulders. Her hair is as red as his.”

“Done!”

Meanwhile, Reynard had nosed open a basket of fish and eaten his fill. Then he wound a triple necklace of eels around his neck and jumped out of the cart.

“Foolish fishermen, I’ve eaten your fish and taken your eels! Catch me if you can!” Oh, the fishermen tried, but Reynard slipped away back to his castle. And there his wife and children ate a joyous feast.

Greek Stories

Breathe Hot, Breathe Cold

Considerably modified and expanded from Aesop’s fable “The Man and the Satyr”. I don’t know where exactly I got this.

Time: 3:01

Once there was a traveler in the southern lands who became lost in the woods on a rainy night. Cold and drenched, he wandered on until he saw a fire in the distance. He rushed towards it, and found that it was in a cave. He stood there a moment, dazzled by the light, and then called out

“Ho the fire! May I join you?”

[gruff voice] “Yes, yes, come in, and out of the rain and cold!” So the man entered eagerly. He had just gotten up to the fire when he saw that the other man had only one eye, and that was in the middle of his - by all the gods, it was a <man-eating> Cyclops!

“Ahhh! A monster!”

“Where?!” *[cyclops looks over shoulder, leaps up, and hits head on low cave roof]* “OW!”

“You!” *[man points at cyclops]*

“ME?! You think *I’m* a monster! I am a very civilized Cyclops! I wouldn’t hurt a fly. Now, use the sense the gods gave a chicken and come sit down by the fire! I’ve just made some porridge, and you’re welcome to have some”

Well, the man *was* cold, and soaked to the skin, so he crouched down by the fire - not too close to the Cyclops, just in case - and watched his companion very closely *[man crouches over fire, rubbing hands and blowing on them]* The Cyclops, who was eating his porridge with great gusto, looked up and said *[quite calmly and conversationally, but a little puzzled]*

“Why are you blowing on your hands like that?”

[jump a little] “Huh? Oh - my hands are *freezing*, and I’m trying to warm them up.”

“Oh.” The traveller watched the Cyclops finish the bowl of porridge with great relish. Perhaps, he thought, this Cyclops really won’t hurt me. “Um - about that porridge...”

“Yes, yes, help yourself. Do you need a bowl or - oh, good. Have as much as you like, I can always make more.” And now it was the Cyclops’ turn to watch the man eat. “How is it?”

“Oh, it’s good, very good, but - ouch! - a little too hot.” *[man starts blowing on the spoonful of porridge]*

[really puzzled now] “But why are you blowing on it?”

“I’m trying to cool it off, of course!” *[duh!]*

[Cyclops’ eyes get big as saucers, and he starts to get up] “What - what kind of creature are you that can blow both hot and cold? You must be some sort of - MONSTER! AAAHHHHH!” And with that the Cyclops fled screaming out of the cave, leaving the traveller, puzzled and bemused, staring out into the night.

King Midas and the Golden Touch

Based on Ovid’s Metamorphoses page <>

Time: 3:41

Bacchus, the god of wine and chaos, was traveling through Greece. The women who worshipped him, the Bacchantes, were with him, as was his favorite traveling companion, old drunken Silenus. They drank and reveled their way across Greece, but when they reached Sparta, Silenus got lost. He was so drunk he just fell over where he was and lay there.

Some peasants found him and recognized him, so they took him to their king, Midas. King Midas was a devout worshipper of Bacchus, so he was thrilled to see Silenus. He took him in, cleaned him up, fed him, and they drank deep into the night.

Midas found Bacchus quickly - all he needed to do was look for chaos and drunkenness - and brought Silenus to Bacchus himself.

“There you are, my boon companion of the vine! I grieved for your loss! King Midas, thank you for returning him to me! I grant you one wish for doing me this favor.”

Midas was greedy, and had always wished for one thing. “O lord of wine, I wish that everything I touch turn to gold.”

[pause] “You are certain, good Midas? *[small smile]* Very well. Everything you touch will turn to gold. I wish you joy of it!” *[laughs]*

Midas walked back, his heart singing. His head was filled with dreams of gold - he would be richer than Croesus <spelling? pronunciation?> himself! He played with the golden touch, tapping plants and leaves as he went by, grinning as they changed. He could hardly believe his luck!

He arrived back at his palace, and ordered a feast set out for him. He went around and turned his plate, bowl, goblet, spoon, and knife into gold. He admired the gold, its beauty and its sheen. Then the servants set food before him. *[dawning horror throughout this sequence]* He picked up his golden goblet, filled with red wine. The wine touched his lips - and turned to solid gold. King Midas was taken aback. He touched his bread - solid gold. He brought food to his lips - solid gold again. His servants, watching, *[stare in horror]* began to back away.

Then his daughter rushed out. *[arms open wide]*

“Father! Where have you been?”

[Midas waves her off, backs away] “No, no NO! Stay away, child!” A servant caught her just as she was about to throw herself into her father’s arms.

[despair, looks around] “Oh, what have I done? What have I done? Oh, Bacchus! This is no blessing, it is a curse! I pray you, god of the vine, lift my foolish wish away from me!”

And Bacchus appeared *[laughing]* “Are you certain you wish to be rid of the golden touch?”

“Yes, oh yes great god!”

“You learned more quickly than I thought, foolish little king. Go wash in the river Pactolus and you will be free of your wish.”

Midas hurried to the river, touching nothing on the way. He had had enough of gold. He washed in the river, and just as the god said, he was free of the golden touch. Now the sands of that river sprinkled with gold, and Midas is a wiser man.

Icelandic Stories

Now I Should Laugh If I Were Not Dead

Based on World Folktales, page 367

Time:3:24

Two wives were arguing.

“My husband is more foolish than yours!”

“No, mine is the more foolish!”

“Mine!”

“No, mine!”

This went on for a few minutes, until finally one wife said

“No use arguing about it when we can prove it one way or the other. We shall each test our husbands and see which is the more foolish.”

“Agreed!”

So the wives went home and set to work. The first wife went through the motions of carding and spinning, but without wool. When her husband asked

“Why are you scraping the cards together without any wool?” she said

“Oh, but this is a very fine wool, and hard to see. I am going to make you a fine set of clothes from it.” And so she continued going through the motions. Carding, spinning, weaving, washing, cutting, and sewing. Her husband watched her go through all these steps with wonder and admiration, thinking his wife an amazing woman indeed.

Meanwhile, the second wife said to her husband

“Why are you out and about? Don’t you know you are very sick?”

“But I feel fine.”

“No, you are very sick. You must go lay down.” And her husband did. A few days later, she said

[crying a little] “I have ordered the coffin”

“But why?”

“Silly man, don’t you know you are dead?”

“Dead?”

“Yes, you died in the night.” And so her husband lay very still, thinking he was dead. His wife washed him and dressed him in his best clothes, and he lay limp the whole time, just like a corpse. Then the coffin arrived, and she had him put in the it.

On the day of the funeral, the first wife helped her husband dress in the fine new clothes she had just made for him. *[look proud and pleased]* He strutted around, thinking himself very well dressed when in fact he was naked as the day he was born. And so they joined the funeral procession for the second husband.

Now the second wife had had a window put into the coffin, so her husband could see all the people in his funeral procession. Everyone in the procession was sad and sorry until they saw the first husband strutting around naked. Then they could not help laughing. And when the “dead” husband saw his friend naked, he opened the coffin, sat up, and said

“I would laugh if I were not dead!” And then everyone realized that the two wives had played tricks on their husbands, and they laughed at both of them. The two wives laughed hardest of all. Then the first wife said to the second

[laughing] “I convinced my husband to walk naked in clothes that weren’t there, but you convinced yours that he was dead. You win the argument, your husband is the more foolish.”

Irish Stories

Half a Blanket

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 63

Time: 1:44

The husband was more than tired of his wife’s old father. He sat by the fire all day, doing nothing. Annoying. And when he ate, he dribbled his food and spilled his drink. Disgusting. And

when he slept, his snoring shook the house. Maddening! So finally the husband said to his father-in-law

“I’m sending you out of the house. It’s the road for you, father.” The wife was horrified.

“What? Send my poor old father out on the road?”

“He does nothing, he dribbles his food, and he snores!”

“But he’s worked hard almost all his life - surely he can rest now!”

“No! I want him out of this house!”

[Pause. Start crying] “But - but - at least give him a blanket!”

“What! A waste a whole blanket on that old man!”

Then their child spoke up and said

“No, give him half a blanket, father, so I have half a blanket for you when I turn you out on the road.”

[open-mouthed] The husband looked at his child *[pause, then speak more gently]* “No, there’ll be no one turned out on the road from this house.” And so the old man stayed until he died.

Italian Stories

Bastianelo

Based on World Folktales, page 362. I have modified it greatly.

Time: 5:38

The wine ran out in the middle of the wedding feast. The bride got up, saying

“I will go and fetch more from the cellar.” She went down into the cellar, starting filling the pitcher *[pause]* and saw a butcher’s knife stuck in the wall above the wine cask.

“Oh, no!”, she said, “Suppose we have a son, and we name him Bastianelo, and he comes down here to get wine, and the butcher knife falls on him and kills him! Oh, my poor son!” And she stood there crying as the wine overflowed the pitcher.

Soon the bride’s mother got up saying,

“I’ll see what’s taking her so long.” And she went down into the cellar, and saw her daughter standing there crying while wine poured onto the floor.

“Daughter! Why are you crying?”

“Oh mother! Suppose I have a son, and we call him Bastianelo, and he comes down here to get wine, and that butcher knife falls on him and kills him! Oh, my poor son!” And her mother began to cry as well, “Oh, my poor grandson!” And the wine still poured onto the floor.

Soon the bride’s father got up saying,

“I’ll see what’s taking them so long.” And he went down into the cellar and saw his wife and his daughter standing there crying while wine still poured out onto the floor.

“Wife! Daughter! Why are you crying?”

“Oh, father! Suppose I have a son, and we call him Bastianelo, and he comes down here to get wine, and that butcher knife falls on him and kills him! Oh, my poor son!” And her mother and her father cried, “Oh, my poor grandson!” And the wine still poured out onto the floor.

Finally the groom went down into the cellar and saw his bride and her parents crying while wine still poured out onto the floor.

[upset] “What is wrong here?” And his bride recounted her tale of woe, and her parents nodded and wept. The groom pulled the butcher knife out of the wall, and - well, it was too late for the wine, all of it was on the floor.

[angry] “I don’t believe this! The wedding feast not even over and all of you mourning our imaginary son’s death! I’m leaving, and I swear I won’t be back until I find three people sillier than all of you!” Then they had a reason to cry, and they begged him to stay, but on he went.

He traveled for a few days, then he saw a man with a wheelbarrow running in and out of a house. The wheelbarrow was empty, but the man was sweating and panting. Curious, the groom walked up to him and asked

“What are you doing?”

“The house is dark, so I’m filling my wheelbarrow with sunlight and bringing it into the house. But there’s so much dark in there that it’s just not working.”

The groom walked inside, opened the shutters, and said

“Your problem is solved.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you so...” But the groom was walking away, and he said to himself,

“There’s one.”

A few days later he was staying in an inn when he heard the most amazing bumps and thumps from the room next door. Curious, the groom walked in and found a man holding his trousers out and jumping about.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m trying to jump into my trousers. I’m getting old, and it takes longer and longer every day.” The groom sat the man down on the bed, put his trousers on one leg at a time, and said,

“Your problem is solved.” The man said

“Oh, thank you, thank you so...” But the groom was walking away, and he said to himself,

“There’s two.”

A few more days passed, and the groom came to a walled city. There was a wedding party outside the gate, gathered around the bride on a horse, and they were all arguing. Curious, the groom walked up and asked

“What are you doing?”

“The bride is too tall to pass through the gate when she’s on the horse. We’re trying to decide whether to cut off the bride’s head or the horse’s legs.”

Our groom pushed the bride’s head into the horse’s neck, slapped the horse, and they went through. The groom said

“Your problem is solved.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you so...” But our groom was walking away, back to his own bride. And they did have a son, and they named him Bastianelo, and he is still living to this day.

The Happy Man's Shirt

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 417

Time:3:18

The prince mourned, and every day his face grew paler. His father the king looked on with worry.

[worried]“Why so sad, my son?”

[head hanging down slightly, almost monotone]“I don’t know”, answered the prince

“Is there anything you need?”

“No”

“Are you in love?”

“No.”

[frustrated]“Then what is wrong?”

[looks up at his father] “I told you, father - I don’t know.”

So the king called in his wisest and most learned advisors and asked them how to cure the prince. When they came back from their consultation, the chief among them said,

[big voice, yet humble] “Majesty, we have studied the stars and discussed the problem, and we know what you must do. Find a happy man and exchange his shirt for your son’s. Then the prince will be cured”

So the king began his search for a happy man. He realized he could not offer a reward, for anyone seeking a reward was not happy as they were. No, he needed a man who wanted for nothing. He asked the palace priest

“Are you happy?”

“Why yes, Majesty, I am happy.”

“Would you like to be a bishop?”

“Oh, Majesty, if only it were so!”

“Away with you! You are not a truly happy man!”

And his son grew more pale and more sickly.

He heard of a king who ruled over a wealthy kingdom with no enemies. He had a good wife and many children - surely he must be happy! So the prince’s father went to this king and asked

“Are you happy?”

[Sigh] “I should be, I know - Fortune smiles and smiles upon me. But I worry, day and night - what will happen to my kingdom when I die? No, I am not a happy man.” The prince’s father went home, to find his son had taken to his bed.

One day the king was out walking in the forest alone, grieving over his son. Then he heard a man singing joyfully, and thought

“Surely a man who sings like that is happy!” He found the man, and asked him

“Are you happy?”

“Indeed, sir, I am.”

“Would you like to go to the capital?” The king held his breath

“No, indeed. I wouldn’t trade places with the king himself. I’m happy as I am.”

“At last! At last! My good man, I will give you anything you want - anything - just - just” *[look down at man’s chest]* And the king ripped the man’s jacket open and saw - *[pause, look up, grieved]* the happy man had no shirt.

Japanese Stories

The Price of a Smell

I don’t know where I got this one

Time: 2:08

If you change the type of eatery from a fish stand to, say, a tavern, you can make this a generic European story

Once there was a student who was so poor he had nothing but rice to eat. But he discovered that if he ate his rice where he could smell the fish cooking at a nearby fish stand, his rice tasted much better.

[Big sniff] “Ahhhh!” So he ate there every day. But soon, the owner of the fish stand noticed the student and asked

“What are you doing here?”

“Oh, I have found that eating my rice where I can smell the fish cooking makes my rice taste much better.”

“What!”, said the owner, who was a mean and greedy man. “You are stealing that smell! You owe me money”

“But - a smell? Money for a smell? That’s not right!*[short laugh]* And besides, I have no money to spare!”

They stood in the road arguing until finally the owner dragged the student before a judge. The judge heard the case and turned to the student.

[hand out]“Give me all your money.”

“But Your Honor - I have so little! If I give it to you, I won’t be able to eat or pay my rent!”

[hand out futher, speak more sternly] “That doesn’t matter. Justice must be done. Give me all your money!”

[Crestfallen] *[Big sigh, hang head]* And the student gave the judge the few coins he had. *[Pick head up]* The owner was thrilled! He loved money! He could hardly wait, even though it was just a few coins!

The judge sat and jingled the money in his hand.

[hands out, greedy face] “Your Honor - please, give me my payment”

“I already have”, said the judge, handing the coins back to the student. “The price of the smell is the sound of the money”

Jewish Stories

A Dispute in Sign Language

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, pg. 42

Time: 3:55

Once there was a wicked priest who hated all Jews. He wanted to kill them all. Finally *[pause]* he came up with a plan. He called the rabbi before him and said

“I wish to have a dispute in sign language with a Jew. You have thirty days to find someone who will understand me and reply correctly, or I will kill you all.”

The rabbi went back and told his people of the wicked priest’s demand. All of them thought day and night of how to understand the priest’s signs and answer them, but no one could do it. One week, two weeks, three weeks passed. All the Jews were crying and fasting and praying to God for help. Then a chicken farmer who had been away all that month came home to find his family in a dreadful state.

“What is wrong, wife? Why are you and the children crying and fasting and praying?”

[crying] “Oh, husband, that wicked priest is going to kill us all unless one of us can hold a dispute with him in sign language. We only have a week left, and even the rabbi does not know what to do!”

“What, a simple argument in sign language? I will do it!”

And so the chicken farmer met with the wicked priest for the dispute.

The priest held up one finger. The chicken farmer held up two. Then the priest brought out a piece of cheese. The farmer responded by pulling out an egg. Finally the priest scattered grain all over the floor. The farmer put a hen on the floor, and the hen ate all the grain.

[astonished] “Amazing!”, said the priest, “You understood me! Truly the Jews must be a wise people if even the humblest can dispute so.” And he gave the farmer many gifts, and repented of his wicked hatred.

The chicken farmer went home and told everyone that they were saved.

“But what did he do? And how did you answer him?”

“First, he held up one finger, meaning he would put out one of my eyes. So I held up two fingers, meaning I would put out both his eyes. Then he took out some cheese, showing that he had food while I did not. I pulled out an egg to show that I did not need his charity. Then he scattered grain on the floor, so I let a hen loose. She was hungry and she ate all the grain. And now he says he will no longer persecute us.”

And the Jews cheered, *[throw arms up]* “Hurray!”

But the rest of the town went to the priest.

“What did you ask him? And how did he answer?”

“First I held up one finger, meaning there was one King. He held up two, meaning there were two kings, one in heaven and the other on earth. Next I showed him some cheese, asking if it was from a white goat or from a brown goat. He took out an egg, asking if it was from a white hen or from a brown hen. Then I scattered grain on the floor, to show that the Jews were scattered all over the earth. He let loose a hen which ate all the grain, to show that the Messiah will gather all the Jews together. Truly they are a wise people!”

The Noisy House

I don't know where I got this

This story is good for audience participation - have them make the various noises

Time: 3:40

The man was desperate. The noise in his house was more than he could bear. The baby was always crying, “WAHHH!”, the children were always screaming, “DID TOO! DID NOT! MOM, HE”S LOOKING AT ME!”, and the wife was always yelling at the children “BE QUIET!” So he went to the rabbi and explained the problem.

The rabbi [*nodding his head*] said to the man, “You have chickens?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Bring the chickens into the house”

“What! But that will make the noise even worse!”

“You asked for advice, and I have given it to you. Do what you will.”

Well, the rabbi was said to be wise, so the man did as he said. And now the house was even noisier. The rooster was always crowing “ER-ER-ER-ER-ERRRR!”, the baby was always crying, “WAHHH!”, the children were always screaming, “DID TOO! DID NOT! MOM, HE”S LOOKING AT ME!”, and the wife was always yelling at the children “BE QUIET!”. He couldn't stand it! So he went to the rabbi again.

The rabbi [*nodding his head*] said to the man, “You have a goat?”

[*a little hesitantly*] “Yes, of course.”

“Bring the goat into the house”

“What! But that will make the noise even worse!”

“You asked for advice, and I have given it to you. Do what you will.”

Well, the rabbi was said to be wise, so the man did as he said. And now the house was even noisier. The goat was always bleating “BAAAA! BAAA! BAAA!”, the rooster was always crowing “ER-ER-ER-ER-ERRRR!”, the baby was always crying, “WAHHH!”, the children were always screaming, “DID TOO! DID NOT! MOM, HE”S LOOKING AT ME!”, and the wife was always yelling at the children “BE QUIET!”. He couldn't stand it! So he went to the rabbi again.

The rabbi [*nodding his head*] said to the man, “You have an ox?”

[*more hesitantly*] “Yes, of course.”

“Bring the ox into the house”

“What! But that will make the noise even worse!”

“You asked for advice, and I have given it to you. Do what you will.”

Well, the rabbi was said to be wise, so the man did as he said. And now the house was even noisier. The ox was always lowing, “MOOOO, MOOOO”, the goat was always bleating “BAAAA! BAAA! BAAA!”, the rooster was always crowing “ER-ER-ER-ER-ERRRR!”, the baby was always crying, “WAHHH!”, the children were always screaming, “DID TOO! DID NOT! MOM, HE”S LOOKING AT ME!”, and the wife was always yelling at the children “BE QUIET!”. He couldn't stand it! So he went to the rabbi again.

The rabbi said to the man, “Take the ox, the goat, and the chickens out of the house.”

“Gladly!” said the man. He did as the rabbi said.

And now the baby was always crying, “WAHHH!”, the children were always screaming, “DID TOO! DID NOT! MOM, HE’S LOOKING AT ME!”, and the wife was always yelling at the children “BE QUIET!!”

“Ahhhh”, said the man, “the house is so quiet and peaceful.”

The Wife’s One Wish

Based on A Harvest of World Folktales, page 554

Time: 2:58

Once there was a man who wanted a divorce. He loved his wife dearly, but they had been married for ten years and had no children. Jewish law allows divorce in those conditions, and the man’s desire for an heir was greater than his love for his wife, so he went to Rabbi Simon. But Rabbi Simon did not like divorce. So the Rabbi tried to persuade the man to stay married, and when that failed, he said,

“When you were married, you had a feast and a celebration. You should do the same for your divorce. So go home, have a feast and a celebration, and come back to me tomorrow. Then I will grant you the divorce.”

[scratch head] The man thought this was odd, but he said

“If that is what I must do, I will do it.”

So he went home and did as Rabbi Simon said. During the feast he drank some wine. *[pause]* Then he drank some more. *[pause]* And then he drank even more. Finally he turned to his wife and said

[somewhat drunkenly] “My dear beloved, I am only divorcing you because I want an heir. So to show my love for you, I will allow you to take your favorite item from our house to your father’s house.”

[upset] “Why, thank - *[suddenly cheerful, face lights up with idea]* Ah! Thank you, husband, I will do just as you say.”

The wine continued to flow freely, and soon many guests were asleep - as well as the host. When the wife saw this, *[big smile]* she was very pleased indeed.

The husband woke up the next morning, *[look around]* looked around, and said

“Where on earth am I?”

“You are in my father’s house.”

“Wife! What am I doing here?”

“You said I could take my favorite item from our house to my father’s house. And so I did. *[a little shyly]* That item is you.”

[soppy smile] At this the husband’s heart melted, and he decided he did not want a divorce. And so they remained happily married to the end of their days.

Norwegian Stories

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

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 348

Time: 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.

Welsh Stories

Pergrin and the Mermaid

Based on Favorite Folktales from Around the World, page 347

Time: 1:37

Pergrin was amazed. He had just taken his boat into a little recess in the rocks, and there was a mermaid. She was combing her hair, and never saw him until he grabbed her. He dragged her back to his boat, where she cried and wept.

[crying] “What do you want with me, cruel man? Let me go!”

“I want treasure - gold and silver!”

“I have no gold, I have no silver. But I promise if you let me go I will give you three shouts at the time of your greatest need.” Her tears had softened Pergrin’s heart, so he let her go back to her people in the deeps.

Years passed and he forgot about her and her promise. But one day, when he and his son were out fishing and the sea was still and calm, she raised her head above the ocean right next to his boat.

“Pergrin! Pergrin! Pergrin! Go back to shore! Go back to shore! Go back to shore!” He and his son did as she said and turned back for shore right then and there, and the moment he tied up his boat a great storm struck the sea. Twice nine other fishermen had gone out that day, and all drowned for not hearing the mermaid’s warning.

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