



The Three Sillies

Adapted by Chip Colquhoun from the European folk tale

Illustration by Heather Rose

This story begins the way many stories begin: a Handsome Man was riding a horse through a village when he spotted a Beautiful Girl. He looked at her, and she looked at him. He kept looking at her, and she kept looking at him. And he looked at her and she looked at him, and...

...well, you probably know what happened next. He asked if she would like to go for a drink (in those days, villages didn't have coffee shops yet; most people drank fruit juice—even grown-ups). They drank and talked and laughed, then they went to see a puppet show. Then they had

dinner at a romantic restaurant, and before you knew it...

...that's right: the Handsome Man asked the Beautiful Girl to marry him, and she said "Yes!"

The Beautiful Girl's mum and dad were really happy when they found out that their daughter was going to marry the Handsome Man. They decided to invite the Handsome Man for dinner so they could all get to know each other.

Because it was a special dinner, the mum and dad thought they should have a special drink. So as everyone sat around the dinner table, they asked the Beautiful Girl to go into the cellar and fetch a bottle of the finest wine they had.

Off went the Beautiful Girl down the steps and into the cellar. She was at the bottom step when she just happened to look up...

...and there, stuck in the ceiling, was an axe.

As soon as she saw it, the Beautiful Girl gasped—and she

said, "Oh my! Look at that axe! What if I marry my man? And what if we have a fine son? And what if the son comes down to the cellar to fetch some wine and the axe falls down and chops off his head...?!"

"Oh, it's so terribly sad!"

And the Beautiful Girl sat down on the bottom step, and began to cry.

Meanwhile, the Handsome Man was still sitting up at the table with the mum and dad.

The mum was beginning to get worried. Why had her daughter not come back yet? Maybe she didn't want to marry the Handsome Man anymore? The mum decided to find out.

She excused herself, saying, "Maybe the finest wine is on a high shelf, and my daughter needs help to reach it. I'll just go and look."

Then off went the mum down the steps and into the cellar. When she saw her daughter sitting there in tears, she said, "Whatever's the matter darling?"

The Beautiful Girl looked at her and said, "Oh Mum! Look at that axe! What if I marry my man? And what if we have a fine son? And what if the son comes down to the cellar to fetch some wine and the axe falls down and chops off his head...?!"

"Oh, it's so terribly sad!"

Her mum looked at the axe, then said, "Oh... That is sad!"

And the mum sat next to the Beautiful Girl on the bottom step, and they both began to cry.

Meanwhile, the Handsome Man was still sitting up at the table with the dad.

The dad was beginning to get worried. Why had his wife and daughter not come back yet? Maybe his daughter didn't want to marry the Handsome Man anymore? The dad decided to find out.

He excused himself, saying, "Maybe the finest wine is on a very high shelf, and my wife and daughter need the ladder to reach

it. The ladder is really heavy; I'll just go and look."

Then off went the dad down the steps and into the cellar. When he saw his wife and daughter sitting there in tears, he said, "Whatever's the matter?"

His wife looked at him and said, "Oh Husband! Look at that axe! What if our girl marries her man? And what if they have a fine son? And what if the son comes down to the cellar to fetch some wine and the axe falls down and chops off his head...?!"

"Oh, it's so terribly sad!"

The dad looked at the axe, then said, "Oh... That is sad!"

And the dad sat next to his wife and the Beautiful Girl on the bottom step, and they all began to cry.

Meanwhile, the Handsome Man was still sitting up at the table.

If that was you, I expect you'd be bored after a while—especially since this was the time before

television, mobile phones, and even story books had been invented.

So the Handsome Man decided to find out why everyone was taking so long in the cellar.

Off he went down the steps and into the cellar. When he saw the dad, the mum, and the Beautiful Girl sitting there in tears, he said, "What on earth are you doing?"

The dad looked at him and said, "Oh Handsome Man! Look at that axe! What if our girl marries you? And what if you have a fine son? And what if the son comes down to the cellar to fetch some wine and the axe falls down and chops off his head...?!"

"Oh, it's so terribly sad!"

The Handsome Man looked at the axe, then looked at the family. Then he looked at the axe, then looked at the family. Then he looked at the axe and looked at the family...

...and he stepped over, took the axe out of the ceiling, and put it carefully and safely in a corner.

Then the Handsome Man looked at the family and said, "You are the three silliest people I have ever met. I don't want to marry this Beautiful Girl anymore—not unless I can find three people sillier than you!"

With that, the Handsome Man went back up the stairs and out of the cellar, left the house, got onto his horse, and rode off into the distance.

After he'd been going for some time, the Handsome Man was riding through a forest. Suddenly a strange noise came through the trees—so the Handsome Man took his horse to find out what it was.

What he saw was the strangest thing I think anyone will ever see in a forest: a woman had a ladder against the side of her house, and was trying to push a horse up the ladder and onto the roof!

The horse was neighing, and the woman was heaving and panting.

The Handsome Man said, "Excuse me... What on earth are you doing?"

The woman stopped for a moment to get her breath back—then she said, "Well, it's a long story: Last week I had a hole in my roof, and I fixed it with my hammer. But when I got back down, I realised I'd left the hammer up there on the roof.

"Now I need to put a new shoe on my horse, and I need the hammer to do that. So I've got to get my horse all the way onto the roof where the hammer is!"

Hmmm... Do you think that was the right thing to do?

The Handsome Man said, "Why don't you leave the horse down here, climb up to the roof, and bring the hammer down to the horse?"

But the woman said, "Oh no, it's fine—look, I'm nearly there..."

...and she kept heaving and panting, and the horse kept

neighing, until—at last—she did actually push the horse all the way up and onto the roof. Then she led the horse towards the hammer, right over the patch of roof that the woman had fixed last wee—

CRASH!

The woman and the horse fell through the roof.

The Handsome Man shook his head and said, "Now that was silly."

Then he turned his horse around and rode off into another distance.

After he'd been going for some time, the Handsome Man began to get tired. So he found a hotel, parked his horse, and paid for a room with a bed to sleep in.

He got into his pyjamas, and was just about to fall asleep... when, suddenly, a strange noise came through the wall from the room next door.

The noise was loud, and it kept going on and on—so

the Handsome Man put on his dressing gown to go and find out what it was.

He knocked on the door of the next room.

The door was opened by a man wearing a pyjama top—but he wasn't wearing any pyjama bottoms. He just stood there in his pyjama top and underpants.

The Handsome Man said, "Excuse me... What on earth are you doing?"

The man said, "I'm getting into my pyjama bottoms of course! Look: I put my pyjama bottoms onto this clothes hanger, and I hang the hanger up on the wardrobe, and then... I jump into my pyjama bottoms with both feet! Watch!"

The man did all this, and jumped—but he missed, bashed into the wardrobe, and fell to the floor on his bottom.

"Don't worry," the man said, "I'm fine. It always takes me a little while to get there, but I always get them on in the end."

Hmmm... Is that how you put on your pyjama bottoms?

The Handsome Man said, "Why don't you put one leg in first, and then put the other leg in?"

But the man said, "Oh no, it's fine. I've always put my pyjama bottoms on like this! I always get them on in the end, don't worry..."

...and he put the pyjama bottoms back onto the clothes hanger, hung the hanger back up on the wardrobe, took a jump, and—

THUD!

The man missed, bashed into the wardrobe again, and fell back to the floor on his bottom.

The Handsome Man shook his head and said, "Now that was silly."

The Handsome Man knew he wasn't going to get any sleep in the hotel that night. So he changed back into his clothes, left the hotel, got back onto his horse, and rode off into yet another distance.

After he'd been going for some time, the Handsome Man suddenly heard lots of people shouting. He looked towards the sound, and saw a large group—maybe thirty or forty people—and they all looked very scared.

They were running across a field towards a lake. Some had spades, some had rope, and others had buckets. It looked as if they were all really worried about something.

Being the hero of this story, the Handsome Man wanted to help; so he shouted to them, "Excuse me! What on earth are you doing?!"

And some of the people saw him, and began waving him over, and saying, "Please! Help us! We need your help! Please! Come now...!"

Being the hero of this story, the Handsome Man started riding his horse towards them. "Why?" he said. "What's the problem?"

The people said, "It's the

Moon! The Moon has fallen into the lake! We have to rescue it—please help us!"

Hmmm... Do you think the Moon could have fallen into a lake?

The Handsome Man looked at the lake—and he could see the Moon right there in the water. But when he looked up, he could see the Moon in the sky as well.

So he said to the people, "That's not the Moon in the lake; it's the reflection of the Moon. Look: you can still see the Moon in the sky! You can't rescue a reflection; you'll just get wet and muddy—you might even drown!"

But the large group of people didn't listen; they just jumped into the lake and started trying to rescue the reflection of the Moon. The people with spades began to dig; the people with ropes tried wrapping a rope around the reflection; the people with buckets tried emptying the water from the lake.

Soon they were all very wet, very muddy, and tied up in knots.

And now what do you think the Handsome Man said?

He said, "Now that was silly. And in fact, I've now seen many more than three silly people.

"My silly was worried about something that could happen, but these sillies were all doing something that made no sense at all. So my silly wasn't really that silly after all.

"So I shall head back to my own dear silly, and we shall get married, and we shall live happily ever after for the rest of our lives."

And that is exactly what they did.

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