**The Old Woman's Whitey**

Once there lived a man and woman in the ripe old age of fifty. One day the old woman said to her husband:

– What shall the two of us do, husband, now that we have grown old? If only God would let me give birth, even if it be a piglet, so long as we had offspring.

And one day the old man heard pig's squealing in the room where the old woman slept.

– Wife, wife! – he called. – What have you got in there?

– Oh, husband, I gave birth to a piglet!

They named the piglet Whitey. It was a female, as white as milk. They washed her and rubbed her with straw. And they fed Whitey and kept her inside in the clean. Then the old woman said to the old man:

– You know, husband, our young neighbour Joe is a swineherd, why don't we ask him to keep our piglet with his pigs?

The old woman went and spoke to the boy:

– Joe, my boy, here's a piece of bread, feed my piglet crumb by crumb, until she learns to follow you and the other pigs.

– We will pay you to watch our piglet! – added the old man.

And so the boy kept and watched the piglet for several years until it grew into a young sow. And in all that time, it never rolled in the dirt with the other pigs. Instead it would drink fresh water from the trough and then find a bush to lay beneath and go to sleep. And the swineherd Joe would also go to sleep beneath the bush. He would turn his face towards the sow Whitey, and they would both doze off in the shade.

One afternoon, as he opened his eyes, he saw a girl sitting in the bush. She was combing her golden hair with a golden comb.

He wanted to rub his eyes in case his eyes were playing tricks on him. As he moved his hand – the girl disappeared. He jumped up and into the bush to make sure he was not dreaming. As he looked inside the bush, Whitey the sow snorted back at him. Joe said nothing about it to anyone.

Next day at noon he lay down on the grass in the field. He pretended to go to sleep, but he watched all the time through his eyelashes. And he saw that, where there had been Whitey, the sow, now sat a girl with golden hair. She was combing her golden hair with a golden comb. And again he said nothing about it to anyone.

One day his mother said to him:

– Joe, my son, I have grown old, I can't work any longer, you must get married so that we have some help. I have already found a girl for you!

– What girl, mother?

– That rich girl – she said – Squinter's daughter, Mara.

– I will not have her, mother! I will marry, but I will have the old woman's Whitey, I will have her, or I will have none!

– Are you mad, son, who's ever heard of marrying a sow?

– Well, mother, I will have her, or I will have none!

And he would not have any other but the old woman's Whitey. His mother did not know what to do, so she went to the priest to complain. The priest spoke to the swineherd:

– What are you going on about, she is not even baptized!

– Even so, I will have none other!

– This is beyond us – the priest sighed and wrote to the bishop. And the bishop wrote back: Let them marry if they love each other! And soon afterwards they came to call the banns at the church. Joe came to the church with his sow and the priest asked him:

– Do you happen to know, Joe, when she was born?

– I do – answered the swineherd.

The priest wrote down the year she was born. Then he asked the sow:

– Do you know, Whitey, that you were born in that year?

– Oink, oink, oink! – she answered three times.

And the time of the wedding drew near. The old man and the old woman put on their finest clothes. There would be a wedding party, there would be feasting. The whole village came together. Everybody wanted to see Joe marry the sow. The serving girls set up the dinner table, and when the wedding guests were done dining, the groomsman said to the bridesman:

– Well, come on, let us to the old woman's pigsty to fetch the bride! Musicians, keep on playing merrily, even if the bride is a – sow!

So, all the wedding party went to the pigsty. And in there they found Whitey, as clean as if she had been washed with soap. The bridesman stepped into the pigsty first:

– Come on, bride!

She walked with the bridesman to the church. The priest stood up in front of the altar and spoke to the bride and groom:

– Kneel down, young people!

The young man kneeled, and the sow slid down on her bum. The priest asked Joe, whether he loved the bride?

– I love her! – said the young man.

The priest asked the sow, whether she loved the groom?

– Oink, oink, oink! – snorted Whitey. Whatever he asked her, she answered three times. When he was putting the rings on them, he put the ring on the young man's left hand, but he could not put the ring on her foot. She stretched out her tongue. But the priest would not put the ring on her tongue, she might swallow it. He put it on her tail.

When they returned home the serving girls welcomed them and served the feast. The mother-in-law begged:

– Guests, don't start eating straight away, wait till the bride's dish has cooled! – she was sorry for her, she had a delicate snout.

In the meanwhile the bridesman poured brandy, and offered Whitey a full glass:

– Open your mouth, bride! – She opened her mouth, and he poured the brandy down her throat. – Will you have another glass of brandy, bride Whitey? – he asked, but Whitey wiggled her ears and covered her eyes with them, meaning she would not have any more. One small glass was more than enough.

They dined and feasted until midnight, and then the bridesman said to the wedding guests:

– It is midnight, the feast is over for the bride and groom, they must go to bed now!

And the bride and groom were led to their bedroom. The wedding guests returned to the feast.

Next morning at dawn, the weather turned very cold. The groom's mother was warried that the young couple would be cold. She went to their room to start the fire in the hearth. When she came in she saw pig's skin on the floor next to the bed. She picked it up and threw it in the hearth, and when it began to burn and smell, there came loud ranting from the bed.

– What is it, children, what is it? – asked the mother.

– Mother, you are burning my wedding dress! – cried the bride, and she was no longer a sow, but a golden-haired maiden.

The bride wrapped herself in a bedsheet, for she was completely naked.

– My goodness, you are a beautiful girl! – The mother brought her own bridal dress. – You can have this! – and she handed it to the bride.

The bride put on the dress and made herself pretty. When she stepped in front of the wedding guests everybody dropped to their knees. They said the morning prayer. They thought that the Mother of God appeared to them. They did not think that the bride was once the sow Whitey. And when they learned that it was her, the news of it spread all over the kingdom.

The priest heard about it. He came to the wedding. He could see now that there was no bride equal to her in the whole kingdom. The priest sat down and looked and looked. Eventually he gave the young couple his blessing. And the feast went on for three more days.

I, too, drank a glass of wine there, and my tongue is still wet.

*(Đakovština, region around the town of Đakovo in eastern Croatia)*