

## **The Three Goblets**

*By Andrew James Stevens*

A long time ago there lived a king and queen. The king was fair and just, but the queen was wicked and cruel and hated by the people of the kingdom. The king and queen had three sons. The oldest two were tall and strong, but they were also very rude and had bad manners. The youngest son, however, was very short and skinny, but what he lacked in muscle he made up for in bravery, cleverness and politeness. The king loved all three of them; they were his pride and joy. But, the queen hated the youngest son and began to plot his demise.

She decided the simplest thing to do was send him to the war, where she thought that it would be impossible for him to survive because of his weak body. So, sadly, with many tears (real tears from the king and fake tears from the queen) the youngest prince departed. But instead of dying a sad death, he used his cleverness to outwit his enemies. He was so smart that soon he was made a general. He won every battle he fought in.

But one day there was a skirmish in which his men were outnumbered. They had to retreat far into the desert.

After a week of being stranded in the scorching hot desert with very little food and water, there was a terrible sandstorm. The prince was separated from his men and was forced to take cover in a cave. He sat there for a long time, until finally he decided to explore the cave. He walked down a long, narrow, dark passageway until he came out into a huge cavern. In the cavern was a lake and in the center of the lake, the prince thought he saw a green shining something. He walked around the perimeter of the lake for what seemed like hours. On the far side of the lake he found a small boat which he stepped into and rowed out towards the shining green light. Soon he reached the center of the lake. The prince looked on in amazement; right in front of him was a beautiful tropical island, with a bright sandy beach and a wonderful forest with birds singing and trees swaying in the breeze. But what really caught his attention was a golden chest sitting in the sand with what seemed to be green mist inside of it. He walked towards the chest and then suddenly heard a voice right next to his ear.

“Hello. Have you come to open the chsssst?” The prince looked down and saw a snake slithering up to him. “If you open that chsssst you will be granted great rewardsssss,” said the snake.

“How do I know I can trust you?” asked the prince.

“Beaussse the chsssst issss your only hope,” replied the snake. “If you don’t open this chsssst, you won’t be able to find your way out of the dessssssert or even thisssss cavern.”

What the snake said was true, so the prince approached the chest and very carefully opened it. Immediately the green mist shot out and up towards the ceiling where it disappeared. The prince looked back down into the chest and saw three beautiful goblets made of pure gold, along with one small wooden cup. The three goblets were filled to the brim with a golden liquid. The wooden cup had a small mouthful of what appeared to be water.

“Could you please flip me over?” said a raspy voice. “It’s very painful standing on one’s head, you know.”

The prince bent down and saw that the voice was coming from a small coin. It had the tail’s side up, so he flipped it over to heads.

The mouth opened, and the head of the coin said, “Since you have opened this chest your family has been cursed.” At these words, the prince looked angrily in the direction of the snake, but it had slithered away.

“Ahem,” the coin continued, “please listen to me. As I was saying, the green mist you saw was sickness. Your family has just fallen ill. The only way to cure them is to make them drink out of the cups. Three of the cups will cure them of the deathly sickness but turn them into pigs. The other one will cure the person completely. Take the four cups and me, and I will guide you home.”

So, the prince carefully picked up the coin, the three large goblets, and the small wooden cup. He clambered into the boat, rowed across the lake, and the coin guided him out of the cavern, through the desert, and home to his family. The prince was very careful not to spill any of the liquids. When they reached the kingdom, the coin asked to be put down somewhere because traveling made him weary. So the prince found a nice corner and put the coin down.

The prince first went to his mother, the queen and asked her to pick a cup and drink from it. She quickly took the biggest, most beautiful goblet and drank greedily from it. She immediately turned into a very fat pig. The prince next went to his oldest brother, and his brother took the next most beautiful goblet and drained it in one gulp. He turned into a pig as well. This happened with the prince’s other brother as well.

Finally, the young prince got to the king. The only cup remaining was the small wooden one. The king took it and sipped from it. He was immediately cured. The king was very sad that his wife and two of his children had been transformed into pigs, but he was happy they had not died from the sickness.

A few years later, the old king died peacefully in his sleep and the young prince was crowned king. He married a beautiful queen and they lived happily ever after with their three pigs.