

# The Three Cows

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English

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*Intermediate*  
*3 min read*

There was a farmer, and he had three cows, fine fat beauties they were. One was called Facey, the other Diamond, and the third Beauty. One morning he went into his cowshed, and there he found Facey so thin that the wind would have blown her away. Her skin hung loose about her, all her flesh was gone, and she stared out of her great eyes as though she'd seen a ghost; and what was more, the fireplace in the kitchen was one great pile of wood-ash. Well, he was bothered with it; he could not see how all this had come about.

Next morning his wife went out to the shed, and see! Diamond was for all the world as wisht a looking creature as Facey—nothing but a bag of bones, all the flesh gone, and half a rick of wood was gone too; but the fireplace was piled up three feet high with white wood-ashes. The farmer determined to watch the third night; so he hid in a closet which opened out of the parlour, and he left the door just ajar, that he might see what passed.

Tick, tick, went the clock, and the farmer was nearly tired of waiting; he had to bite his little finger to keep himself awake, when suddenly the door of his house flew open, and in rushed maybe a thousand pixies, laughing and dancing and dragging at Beauty's halter till they had brought the cow into the middle of the room. The farmer really thought he should have died with fright, and so perhaps he would had not curiosity kept him alive.

Tick, tick, went the clock, but he did not hear it now. He was too intent staring at the pixies and his last beautiful cow. He saw them throw her down, fall on her, and kill her; then with their knives they ripped her open, and flayed her as clean as a whistle. Then out ran some of the little people and brought in firewood and

made a roaring blaze on the hearth, and there they cooked the flesh of the cow—they baked and they boiled, they stewed and they fried.

“Take care,” cried one, who seemed to be the king, “let no bone be broken.”

Well, when they had all eaten, and had devoured every scrap of beef on the cow, they began playing games with the bones, tossing them one to another. One little leg-bone fell close to the closet door, and the farmer was so afraid lest the pixies should come there and find him in their search for the bone, that he put out his hand and drew it in to him. Then he saw the king stand on the table and say, “Gather the bones!”

Round and round flew the imps, picking up the bones. “Arrange them,” said the king; and they placed them all in their proper positions in the hide of the cow. Then they folded the skin over them, and the king struck the heap of bone and skin with his rod. Whisht! up sprang the cow and lowed dismally. It was alive again; but, alas! as the pixies dragged it back to its stall, it halted in the off forefoot, for a bone was missing.

“The cock crew,

Away they flew.”

and the farmer crept trembling to bed.

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