

## The three tree thieves

by Chris Rose

Terry had a problem. He had a beautiful house. No, that wasn't the problem. The problem was something else. Near his house there was a lake, some hills, and the sea. That wasn't a problem, either. Terry wanted to look at the wonderful view of the lake and the hills and the sea from his house. And now here's the problem: Terry couldn't see the wonderful view from his window. It wasn't possible to see the lake, the hills and the sea. And Terry really, really liked to look at the lake. But he couldn't see the lake, because between his house and the lake, there was one very, very big tree. This very, very big tree was in the garden of the house next door. Terry asked his neighbour if it was possible to cut the tree down.

"No!" said the neighbour. "I love my big tree!"

This made Terry angry. He really, really wanted to look at the lake, to see the ships on the sea and the sheep on the hills around the lake.

There was only one thing to do.

Terry became a tree thief. He decided to steal the tree. One night, when it was very dark, he went out to the tree with a spade and he started to dig. He dug and dug and dug. Then he dug some more. And some more. But the tree didn't move. The tree had very long, strong roots. Terry was very tired. He went to bed. He felt very depressed.

The next morning, he had an idea. He needed another tree thief! He called his friend Trevor and Terry told Trevor that he needed a tree thief.

"Why?" asked Trevor.

"I can't see the sea!" replied Terry.

"I see", said Trevor.

"Don't worry. I'll come tonight. I'll bring a spade."

That night, Trevor went to Terry's house. Trevor brought a spade with him. Terry and Trevor very quietly went into the neighbour's garden and started to dig. They dug and dug and dug. Then they dug some more. And some more. But it was no good. Even with Terry and Trevor, they couldn't dig deep enough to steal the tree.

The next morning Terry had another idea. They needed another tree thief. With three tree thieves, he thought, they could surely steal the tree! There was a problem. Terry didn't know any other tree thieves. He asked Trevor.

"Sure!" said Trevor. "I know a man called Thomas. I'll come tonight with Thomas and two spades!"

Terry was very surprised when he saw Thomas arrive with Trevor. Thomas was 80 years old.

"Are you sure he can be a tree thief?" Terry asked Trevor.

"I'm sure!" said Trevor.

That night, when it was very dark and very quiet, the three tree thieves went quietly to the neighbour's garden. They started to dig and dig and dig. Then they dug some more. And some more. And this time, the three tree thieves dug so deep that they were able to take the tree from the ground, and steal it. The three tree thieves pulled the tree up out of the ground, and carried it far away. The three tree thieves carried the stolen tree to Trevor's house. Then the three tree thieves put the stolen tree in Trevor's garage. The three tree thieves were all very pleased with themselves.

But there was a problem.

"There's a problem!" said Thomas.

"What's the problem?" asked Terry.

"I've lost my teeth" replied Thomas.

"Your teeth???!?" said Terry and Trevor.

"Yes, my teeth, my false teeth" said Thomas. "I don't have any real teeth. I'm too old. I have false teeth.

Sometimes my false teeth come out. They came out when we were digging up the tree ..."

"That's not a big problem" said Trevor. "You can buy another pair of false teeth."

"No" said Terry, "It is a problem – if the police find Thomas' teeth, they will know who took the tree."

"Oh no!" said Trevor, "If they find the tree thief's teeth, they'll know who the tree thief is ..."

There was only one thing they could do. The three tree thieves decided to go back to the garden and look for the lost teeth.

When they arrived at the garden, it was too late ...

There was already a police car next to the big hole in the ground where the tree was. A photographer from the newspaper took a picture of a policeman holding Thomas' teeth.

The next morning there was a story in the newspaper: "The Mystery of the Tree Thief's Teeth"

Before long, a policeman saw that Thomas had no teeth.

"Where are your teeth, Thomas?" he asked. "You are the tree thief! I'm arresting you!" The policeman arrested Thomas. Thomas told the police about Terry and Trevor. The police arrested Terry and Trevor too. The police were very pleased.

In prison, Thomas put his hand in his pocket. He had a surprise.

"My teeth!" he shouted. "Here are my teeth! The night we took the tree I made a mistake. I put my wife's false teeth in!"

"Now the police will think your wife is the tree thief!" said Terry and Trevor.

"No, that's impossible!" replied Thomas, "That night she was playing bingo with her friends. Lots of people saw her playing bingo!"

The police asked an expert dentist to identify the teeth. The expert dentist looked at the teeth.

"No!" said the expert dentist. "These teeth are not Thomas' teeth! Thomas is innocent!"

Terry, Trevor and Thomas cheered.

The police were no longer pleased, and the three tree thieves were free.

**THE END**

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