

## The Nocturnal Adventures of WishSong

Theme: A story about the adventures of a gnome named Wishsong.

It was a fine moonlit night when WishSong danced all alone on 5<sup>th</sup> loop street as the stars watched him and laughed.

WishSong was a gnome and a very ugly gnome at that. He had a grotesque spotty face, bristly grey hair and a stubby disproportioned body. His skin was a dull weary brown for he lived underground all the time and never dared to go to The Beach And Acquire A Very Becoming Sun Tan.

WishSong, contrary to his name, did not wish to sing, or some such conclusion most humans tend to jump to. He was Wish, the Third Son of Song, brother of FishSong, DishSong and YishSong, all exceedingly handsome gnomes I assure you, who are capable of introducing something akin to love in your human heart, if you didn't know that they drank squid-juice every morning to cleanse their bowels.

However WishSong was a delightful singer. He preferred to call his music the 'Notes from Underground'.

But apart from that one redeeming quality, WishSong lived an awful life. He was after all a Gnome With A Very Huge Complex. He Hated Himself.

'Why mamma?' he had implored of his mother many times. 'Why am I so different from the rest? Why am I the black sheep, figuratively of course, in this clan of Exceptionally Good-looking Gnomes? Why did God make me thus? Why **me**?'

To which his mother would sagely narrow her eyes at her son and reply in a monotone. 'When the gnoming gets tough, the tough gets gnoming.'

He never quite understood what she meant, but it sounded fascinating, and strangely relieving. He did not of course know that several years later, his mother would be De-gnomed by the terrible Mr. Tough who unfailingly ploughed his lands every day. Such tragedies could happen only in the Gnome World.

WishSong had three overachieving brothers, which did not help his self-esteem one bit. FishSong was a Water Gnome, DishSong was a Garden Gnome, YishSong was a Tree Gnome and more importantly, they all had Girlfriends.

Every evening, DishSong, FishSong and YishSong would scuttle back home to WishSong, full of tales of their love lives and their work lives which were so full of life and animation that WishSong's fat body would only swell up more and his fiercely beating heart would threaten to burst out of his skin, which he invariably attributed to a bad case of dyspepsia. For WishSong was perennially down in the dumps, and painfully single.

DishSong was the eldest in the family and the handsomest of all gnomes. He was a Travelling Gnome and hence had a Girlfriend for Every Reason and Season. Of course he had only one, but that line sounded nice on his resume and on reading it, every company had wanted to hire him. His charming elf

girlfriend however singularly made up for the lack of plurality, so there was nothing DishSong had to complain about. He was fifty three, in a relationship and happy.

Only once did DishSong bring his girlfriend home. On that ominous occasion, she had caught sight of WishSong lurking in a corner, with such a look of misery on his positively revolting face that she had screamed a scream and scuttled away as fast as she could. Later on, she defended her unbecoming act by saying that it was too dim at the Gnome's Abode and that she couldn't see clearly what she should have seen. But ever since then, the three brothers resolved never to bring their loved ones home.

This only made WishSong hate himself all the more. Infact, the only time he escaped to the world above was during afternoons, when people were too sweaty and irritable to pay any attention to him, and during early mornings, when he had the world to himself.

Every night, he would quietly sneak out around 11 and dance to his heart's content until the wee hours of the day, while the moon smiled indulgently at him and the stars pointed their silvery fingers at him and laughed.

And that was precisely what he was doing on the morning of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at three A.M. Today, his dance seemed to possess a renewed vigor, a sense of freedom he couldn't quite place his finger on. Probably because it was his birthday, he was forty one and one more year was all that was left in his search for the Answer to Life, Universe and Everything.

It did not trouble his Sense of Priority that his family was waiting for him underground, all five of them, with a gigantic squishy green cake which resembled a caterpillar which had only recently died a very painful death. It was his favorite and FishSong had painstakingly scrawled all over the cake in caramel – We Wish You A Very Happy Birthday, Song - although the caramel was slowly diffusing into the green mass that lay underneath. In another hour, the cake would resemble a rather exotic herbal pudding.

'Does he know that today is his birthday?' piped in Little FishSong after an endless hour of waiting. It was well past the midnight surprise and the five gnomes were all too eager to hit the sack again. But Gnoming tradition stipulated that Every Gnome Celebrating His Birthday Must Take A Bite Of Birthday Cake Before Dawn and when in Gnome, do as Gnomans do. So the five sighed little sighs and continued to wait, for their touch screen cell phones had no network underground.

Meanwhile, WishSong was feeling very cold up above, but he was determined to knock off all those kilos piled around his tummy and he continued to dance, alternating between samba and rather embarrassing pelvic thrusts.

Eventually tired of the exercise, he flopped onto the ground and gazed sadly at the stars above. He ran his stubby fingers through his graying hair. A lock of hair landed on his tummy.

He recalled the time when he paid a visit to the Gnome's One Stop Shop for Everything. It was a sprawling mall, supposedly the largest mall in the Universe with restaurants of all sizes and boutiques of all shapes. He however had made his way to the Gnomessentials and had politely enquired of the elf-

shop lady, 'Would you kindly, madam, have any products that would make a Gnome like me handsome and charming? Thank you very much. Yours sincerely, WishSong.'

The wiry elf-lady frowned at the shiny bald patch in front of her for WishSong did not dare raise his chin and look at her in the eye for the fear that he would hopelessly fall in love at first sight.

She did direct him to the shelf containing Impossibly Herbal Gnome Improvers. He had bought an Aloe-Vera Cream with Oh-my-goodness REAL Keratin pearls and with a one year warranty. He had even bought a real bouillabaisse flavored shampoo which FishSong eyed warily. But it didn't help. He turned uglier and even more dejected than before.

He sighed and sat up. He had to continue dancing, no matter what. The show must go on.

He started on a particular brand of Jive which was his especial favorite. For some time, he swirled and swirled, panting and gleaming like a gnome anointed with Real Human Perspiration enhanced Magical Hair Oil. Then he heard a Voice from nowhere.

'You really love to dance, don't you?'

He collapsed on the ground immediately. In his forty one years of night-time dancing, never once had he encountered another specie. He had chosen the secluded of secluded areas for this express purpose. This was an Aberration From The Normal and he wasn't quite sure how to react.

'Eh heh heh heh.' He laughed nervously and cleared his throat. 'Have Feet, Can Dance is my motto. I wish I came up with that from the very beginning.'

The Voice was clearly unimpressed with his answer. It snorted. 'You do know that you dance awfully, don't you?'

WishSong was angry. This pesky Voice had no business to spoil his birthday jive. He was about to make a brilliant, dead awesome comeback, when the Voice stepped out of the foliage and presented itself. It was a stunning elf, the prettiest of them all, and even prettier than how he had imagined the Shop-Lady to be.

'Er...Erm, Ahem, Hmm...' WishSong managed, clearly uneasy. He had heard innumerable words of advice on How To Behave In Front Of The Female Species and theoretically, he was the Casanova of Gnomes. But unfortunately, that was only in theory.

She stopped him from saying anything further and perched comfortably on the branch of an olive tree. 'Go on.' she said. 'Dance.'

Now WishSong encountered what he loved to call an Existential Crisis though he never quite knew what that meant, for he never read any Kafka in his life. He hated to admit that he was feeling self-conscious and that something in those two big amused eyes in front of him was holding him back. He began again, promisingly twiddling his toes. His protruding stomach wobbled to the beat and his pointy ears twitched, not to be left behind.

She laughed, a clear, tinkling perfect laugh. It was a well-behaved sister of the Cruel Guffaw and he very well knew it.

‘Madam.’ he began, addressing the ground. ‘If you would be so kind as to recognize my need for privacy, I would be eternally grateful to you. Thank you very much. Your humble servant, WishSong.’

‘Alright, alright!’ she replied in a voice which did not betray her merriment. ‘I’ll leave you to your awful dancing, just as you wish! See you around!’ and the Voice disappeared into the darkness.

He continued dancing and thoughts flew in his mind in musical harmony. Was this what the Others called a Date? He wondered. He had once, hesitatingly asked YishSong what it meant for a Specie To Date Another Specie and YishSong had rather cuttingly asked him not to be such an Ingnomarus (The gnomes weren’t particularly strong in their spellings). Later on, DishSong had told him in private that he mustn’t ask such difficult questions for no gnome had figured out that complex social phenomenon yet, but it generally meant having coffee and holding hands and talking of Politically Correct Matters with members of The Female Species. It was true that the elf and he did not hold hands, nor did they have coffee, but they did talk and very politely at that. This potential aberration in his life sent his adrenaline pumping and his heart beating very fast.

‘We must calm down, WishSong’ he told himself a little later after sense returned. ‘We must not build mountains out of molehills. We must not overanalyze the events in our lives. We must stop thinking and start living.’

Meanwhile, at his home underground, five gnomes waited patiently for the birthday man to turn up. Two of them were getting hungry and eyed longingly at the pudgy caterpillar cake which eyed longingly at the door waiting for WishSong to show up. He didn’t however and not once did it cross the minds of the Gnomes to feel remotely worried about his safety. The Gnomes were Insured after all.

Meanwhile WishSong, injected with a new found sense of exhilaration, attempted to decipher the System of Traffic Signals down the road. He could not however understand why the yellow light must continually blink at him thus and resolved to Google it one day, for ready-made knowledge is always better than systematic observation, random experimentation and definite conclusions.

‘I can do anything!’ he suddenly shouted out to the world. ‘The world is my oyster! I am no longer yet another fish in the sea! I am not the proverbial black sheep anymore!’ he thus screamed and realized that deep down inside, he was experiencing an excruciating hunger eating up his intestines. ‘My life is under control!’ he screamed for extra effect, and sat on a park bench, holding his stomach in agony.

He did not want to go home and partake of the birthday feast. He was suddenly ashamed of himself, there was no reason he should celebrate his birthday, after all, what had he achieved? Forty years had slipped by unobtrusively and yet another miserable birthday cake which he loved symbolizing a fresh new beginning in his life only depressed him. He leaned back, looked at the stars and sang a very sad song. The trees rumbled dismally and the birds shivered in sorrow upon hearing it. It was powerful, it was intoxicating, it was dangerously addictive in the way only melancholy could be.

'You do however sing very well.' the Voice spoke gently after the music died down. 'You do know that, don't you?'

Yet again, WishSong was faced with the terrible task of finding a breath-taking comeback. He soon gave up. 'Yes, I do. Yes....I do.'

'You should make a profession of it, you really are good' the Voice piped in. 'The people out there are just waiting to hear you, they just don't know it yet.'

WishSong had a sudden vision of him singing in a circus, paraded by elephants on either side. They would make him wear ridiculous amounts of make-up, a shocking pink and yellow outfit and he would have to sing, to bored audiences which waited with bated breath for fire blowing lions and self deprecating clowns. It was too unbearable for him to even imagine.

'I'm sure...Actually I'm not', he replied. 'You see, I'm only a gnome after all. What else can I dream of doing apart from mowing lawns, building tree-houses and cleaning septic fish tanks?'

She laughed, a gentle laugh without any condescension. 'But to me, you're the best singer I will ever know.'

WishSong found himself beaming in joy which sprouted from nowhere. This is what I'm good at, he thought, this is my strength. This is what I ought to list under the 'Core Competencies – Mention Relevant details' section in my resume, if I had one. I have the best voice in the world, I can sing to my heart's content, I can make people happy through my music and ultimately, make myself happy too!

He smiled at the elf in front of him. 'Will you create music with me?' he asked. 'Will you be my melody?'

The elf laughed, all too familiar with The Lame Pick-Up Lines Of The 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 'I sure will' she replied, her eyes twinkling, 'if you promise to dance to my tunes!'

And so they serenaded on 5<sup>th</sup> loop street, while five gnomes snored contentedly below, green pudding slobbering on their chins.

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