

100. St. Martin's Four Wishes (*Les .iv. souhaiz saint Martin*)

Translation by Ned Dubin

Les .iiii. souhaiz saint Martin

Un vilain ot en Normandie
dont bien est droiz que je vous die
.i. fabel merveilleus & cointe.
Toz jors avoit il a acointe
5 saint Martin, que toz jors nommoit
a ses oevres que il fesoit;
ja si liez ne dolenz ne fust
que saint Martins n'amenteüst.
Toz jors nommoit il saint Martin.

10 Li vilains aloit un matin
en son labor si comme il seut;
saint Martin oublier ne veut:
« Saint Martin! dist il, Or avant! »—
& sains Martins li vint devant.
15 « Vilains, fist il, tu m'as molt chier.
Ja ne voudras riene commencer
que toz jors au commencement
ne me nommes premierement.
Je t'en rendrai ja la deserte:
20 lesse ton travail & ta herce,
si t'en reva tout liement!
Je te di bien tout vraiment
ce qu'a .iiii. souhaiz diras
saches tu bien que tu l'avras,
25 mes garde toi au souhaidier—
tu n'i avras ja recouvrier. »
Li vilains l'en a encliné,
puis s'en est arriere torné;
en sa meson s'en va toz liez.
30 Il sera ja bien aresniez:
sa fame, qui chauce les braies,
li a dit: « Vilain, mal jor aies!
Por qoi as tu ja lessié oevre—
por le tens qui .i. poi se cuevre?
35 Il n'ert vespres jusque .vii. liues.
Est ce por encressier tes giues?
Paor avez n'aiez foraje?
Onques n'amastes laborage;
vous fetes molt volentiers feste.
40 A mal eür aiez vous beste
quant vous n'en fetes vostre exploit!

Saint Martin's Four Wishes

In Normandy there lived a peasant
of whom is told so quaint and pleasant
a fabliau that I've a notion
to tell you. Such was his devotion
to Saint Martin that he'd invoke
him in all things he undertook;
whether elated or depressed,
it was Saint Martin he addressed;
every day he called on Saint Martin.

The peasant set out on a certain
morning, as was his wont, to plow.
He'll not forget Saint Martin now.
“Saint Martin!” he cried out, “giyyup!”
and that's when Saint Martin showed up.
“Peasant,” he said, “you have been loyal
to me, and never start to toil,
no matter what your task may be,
without first calling upon me.
You have well earned my special favor.
Now leave your harrow, drop your labor,
and get you home with a light heart,
for I will truly do my part
and herewith promise I will grant
whatever four wishes you want,
but use your wishes wisely, for
once they've been used you'll get no more.”

The peasant bowed low to the ground
in reverence, then turned around
and hurried home walking on air.
There's trouble waiting for him there.
His wife, the one who wears the pants,
lit into him: “What evil chance
brings you home now, oaf? Did you quit
work 'cause it's clouded up a bit?
You've hours of daylight left for tilling.
Or is your paunch in need of filling?
Are you afraid you'll miss your chow?
You've never taken to the plow,
no—life for you is one big lark!
We may as well sell off the stock
since you won't work them anyway!

Vous en alastes orendroit—
tost avez or jornee faite!
— Tais toi, ma suer, ne te deshaite,
45 dist li vilains, quar riches sommes!
Des or nous sont remez noz sommes
& no travail, je le devin.
Je ai encontre saint Martin,
.iiii. souhais me dona ore;
50 nes ai pas souhaidiez encore
tant que j'eüsse a toi parlé:
selonc ce que m'avras löé
souhaiderai tout maintenant—
terre, richece, or & argent. »
55 Quant cele l'oï, si l'acole,
si s'umelie de parole:
« Sire, dist ele, dis tu voir?
— Oil, bien le porras savoir.
— Ahi! fet ele, douz amis,
60 ja ai je en vous tout mon cuer mis
de vous amer, de vus servir,
or le me devez bien merir.
Je vous demant, se il vous plaist,
que vous me donez .i. souhait—
65 vostre seront li autre troi,
& si serez lors bien de moi.
— Tais toi, dist il, ma bele suer!
Je ne le feroie a nul fuer,
que fames ont foles pensees;
70 tost demanderiez .iii. fusees
de chanvre, de laine ou de lin.
Bien me souvient de saint Martin,
qui me dist que bien me gardaïsse
& que tel chose souhaidaïsse
75 qui nous peüst avoir mestier.
Je les voudrai toz souhaidier,
& sachiez bien que je criembroie,
se le souhait vous otrioie,
que tel chose souhaidissiez
80 dont moi & vous empirissiez.
Ne connois pas bien voz amors?—
se deïssiez que fusse uns ours
ou asnes ou chievre ou jument,
jel seroie tout esraument.
85 Por ce si redout vostre otroi.
— Sire, dist ele, en moie foi
je vous afi de mes .ii. mains
que toz jors serez vous vilains.

See what you call a working day—
you're back when you have scarcely gone!”
“Don't be upset, my love, keep calm,”
the peasant said. “Our fortune's made!
Henceforth our burdens may be laid
aside, of that much I am certain,
because I met up with Saint Martin.
He gave me four wishes to use
as I thought best. I've yet to choose;
I meant first to consult with you,
and as you advise me to do
I now intend to make my wishes
for gold and silver, land and riches.”

When she heard this, the woman reached
to hug him and toned down her speech.
“Husband,” she said, “can this be so?”
“Indeed yes, as you soon will know.”
“My dearest, sweetest love,” said she,
“my heart is yours eternally
to love and serve you hand and foot.
You should repay me good for good.
I ask you, please, to let me have
one of the wishes the saint gave.
You still will have the other three,
and you will have done right by me.”
“Hush,” he replied, “my darling wife!
I wouldn't, no, not on my life,
for women all have addled brains.
Why, you might ask to have three skeins
of hemp or wool or linen thread!
I remember Saint Martin said
that I should wisely use my wishes
and only wish for something such as
will benefit us evermore,
so I intend to use all four.
Know that I'm mortally afraid,
if I gave you one, that instead
you'd wish for something that might do
untold harm to both me and you.
If you should wish I was a bear
or jackass, or a goat or mare,
I would become one on the spot.
I know how much you love me: not.
That's why I fear to let you share
my wishes.” “Sir,” she said, “I swear
in good faith with both hands raised high,
you'll stay a peasant till you die.

90 Ja par moi n'avrez autre forme,
ja vous aim je plus que nul homme.
— Bele suer, dist il, or l'aiez.
Por Dieu, tel chose souhaidiez
ou moi & vous aiommes preu!
— Je demant, dist ele, en non Dieu
95 que vous soiez chargez de vis:
ne vous remaingnent oeil ne vis,
teste ne braz, piez ne coste,
ou par tout ne soit vit planté,
si ne soient ne mol ne doille,
100 ainz ait a chascun vit sa coille;
toz dis soient li vit tendu,
si sanblerez vilain cornu! »
Quant ele ot souhaidié & dit,
du vilain saillierent li vit.
105 Li vit li saillent par le nez
& par la bouche de delez,
si ot vit lonc & vit quarrez,
vit gros, vit cort, vit reboulez,
vit corbe, vit agu, vit gros...
110 sor le vilain n'ot si dur os
dont vit ne saillent merveillous—
li vit li saillent des genous.
Por Dieu, or entendez merveilles!
li vit li saillent des oreilles,
115 & par devant en contremont
li sailli uns granz vis du front,
& par aval dusques aus piez
fu li vilains de vis chargez;
molt par fu bien de vis vestuz
120 de toutes pars—fu bien cornuz.
Quant li vilains se vit si fait,
« Suer, dist il, ci a lait souhait!
Por qoi m'as tu si atorné?
J'amaisse mieus estre mort né
125 que seur moi eüsse tant vit—
onques mes nus hom tant n'en vit!
— Sire, dist el, je vous di bien
c'un seul vit ne me valoit rien:
sempres ert mol comme pelice,
130 mes or sui je de vis molt riche,
& s'avez encore autre preu,
que jamés ne serez en leu
ou vous doiez point de paiage.
J'ai esté au souhaidier sage;
135 vous ne devez estre irous:

I'll never wish you other than
you are, dearer than any man.”
“My dear,” he said, “let it be yours.
By God, when you wish, make a choice
by which you and I stand to gain!”
“I wish,” she said, “that, in God's name,
there spring up penises galore
over your body, aft and fore!
On face, arms, sides, from head to foot,
may countless penises take root,
and let them not be limp or slack:
let each be furnished with its sack,
and let them stand stiff and upright!
Now, won't you be a horny sight!”
Then, as soon as the woman spoke,
hundreds of pricks began to poke
out all over. Penises grew
around his nose and his mouth, too.
Some pricks were thick, some oversized,
some long, some short, some circumcised,
curved pricks, straight pricks, pointed and hardy...
every bone in the peasant's body
was miraculously endowed
and prickled, fully-cocked and proud.
You've never heard wonders like these!
Pricks grow out of his ears, and he's
amidst his forehead, standing tall,
the most enormous prick of all,
and right down to his feet he's coated
with penises erect and bloated.
From toe to crown he was bedecked
with antlers, bloated and erect.
Weighed down by penis upon penis,
the peasant said, “This wish was heinous!
Why give me all this finery?
Better to be stillborn than be
with pricks so overgrown and cluttered!
Was ever any man so studded?”
“Husband,” she said, “I'll tell you why.
Your one prick couldn't satisfy,
just hanging limply like a fox
stole, but now I've a wealth of cocks!
Your lot is likewise much improved
in that, whenever you are moved
to travel, you won't be assessed
tariffs or tolls. All for the best
I made my wish, so don't resent it.

il a molt bele beste en vous! »
Dist li preudom: « Ce poise moi.
Je souhaiderai après toi:
je souhaide, dist li preudom,
140 que tu aies autrestant con
com j'ai de vis par deseur moi.
Autrestant con aies seur toi! »
Adonc fu ele bien connue,
qu'ele ot .ii. cons en la veüe,
145 .iiii. en ot ou front coste a coste,
& con devant & con d'encoste,
si ot con de mainte maniere,
& con devant & con derriere,
con tort, con droit & con chenu
150 & con sanz poil & con velu
& con pucel & con estrait
& con estroit & con bien fait
& con petit & con aorce
& con parfont & con seur boce
155 & con au chief & con aus piez.
Adonques fu li vilains liez!
« Sire, dist ele, qu'as tu fait?
Por qoi m'as doné tel souhait!
— Je te dirai, dist li bons hom.
160 Je n'avoie preu en .i. con
puis que tant vit me donieez.
Bele suer, ne vous esmaiez,
que jamés ne vendroiz par rue
que vous ne soiez bien connue!
165 — Sire, dist el, or n'i a plus:
nous avons .ii. souhais perdus;
Souhaidiez que vous vit n'aiez
ne je con. Ainsi le laiez,
s'en avrez .i. de remanant
170 & si serommes riche gent. »
& li vilains souhaide & dist
qu'ele n'ait con ne il n'ait vit.
Donques fu ele molt marie
quant de son con ne trova mie,
175 & li preudom, quant il revit
que il n'ot mie de son vit,
refu de l'autre part iriez.
« Sire, dist ele, souhaidiez
le quart souhait qu'encore avon
180 qu'aiez .i. vit & je .i. con,
si ert ausi comme devant
& si n'avrons perdu noiant. »

There's not a creature half so splendid!"
The peasant said, "I'm not amused.
Three wishes more are yet unused.
I wish," the fellow said at once,
"that you had just as many cunts
on you as I have pricks on me.
May your cunts pop out rapidly!"
At once the cunts start to arise.
A pair appears before her eyes,
four on her forehead in a row,
and cunts above, and cunts below,
and cunts behind, and cunts in front,
every variety of cunt—
bent cunts, straight cunts, cunts gray and hoary,
cunts without hair, cunts thick and furry,
and virgin cunts, narrow and tight,
wide, gaping cunts, and cunts made right,
cunts large and small, oval and round,
deep cunts, and cunts raised on a mound,
cunts on her head, cunts on her feet...
the peasant's joy is now complete.
"Husband, what have you done?" said she.
"Why have you wished this thing on me?"
The good man said, "One cunt won't do
for all the pricks I got from you.
Don't be alarmed, for your condition
will lead to widespread recognition:
when you go walking, you'll continue
to be known for all the cunt in you."
"Husband," she said, "what can I say?
That makes two wishes thrown away,
and now you must use one to fix
us and remove these cunts and pricks.
You'll still have one left out of four,
and we'll be rich forevermore."
The peasant wishes thereupon
that all their cunts and pricks were gone,
but she was anything but cheered
to find her cunt had disappeared,
and he, too, had an awful shock
to find himself without a cock.
Both of them were extremely wroth.
"Husband, it's time to make the fourth
wish we have left to us," said she;
"one prick for you, one cunt for me.
We'll return to our former state
no poorer off, at any rate."

185 & li preudom resouhaida,
que ne perdi ne gaaigna,
que son vit li est revenuz
& ses souhaits a il perduz.

190 Par cest fablel pöez savoir
que cil ne fet mie savoir
qui mieus croit sa fame que lui:
sovent l'en vient honte & anui.

He wished the wish that still remained;
and thus he neither lost nor gained:
he got his prick back at the cost
of the four wishes, which he lost.

This fabliau clearly explains
that a man doesn't use his brains
when his wife's judgment sways his views.
Calamity often ensues.

Expliciunt les .iiii. souhaits saint Martin

1. (Normandy)

57. The harridan cuts short her invective and for the space of this one line cajolingly addresses her husband using the intimate *tu*. She immediately switches back to *vous*, now a mark of deference. He generally uses *tu*. By the plural in line 70 he may mean "all you women," and perhaps 77-85 simply follow through. I cannot account for her use of *tu* in 57-58. Old French often does not bother distinguishing consistently between the two.

189-90. Proverbial (*cf.* #43, 155-6).

© Ned Dubin