

The Three Little Pigs Of Hog Holler Swamp

by Allison M. Cox

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I designed the following story to illustrate some of the causes of asthma and allergies in a format that was fun and would help people remember at least some of the common triggers (dust, mold, pollen, insect sting, poisonous plants, smoke, specific foods, poor ventilation, cosmetics, etc.). Before I tell this story, I talk with the audience about what it is like for me to grow up and live in the world with asthma and allergies. I tell them “I was often embarrassed by the sounds that I would make as a result of my sniffing, sneezing, wheezing and coughing in school, at work, in the library, in church, or anywhere that people were trying to be quiet. So I thought it would be fun for all of us who have had this happen to make these noises on purpose – and really loud! The rest of you can help too. Of course, these are little asthmatic and allergic pigs – so we have to throw in a few snorts as well.” I rehearse with the audience that whenever I bring my hands up to cover my nose and mouth and say that the pigs are beginning to sniffle, snort wheeze and cough... it is time for them to join in with their best sniffles, snorts, wheezes, and coughing. (Audience participation points in the story are marked with italics.)

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Long ago, in the deep South, there lived three little pigs right in the middle of Hog Holler Swamp. They lived there with their Ma, just as all their family had for generations. But right around the springtime, life was always hard on those three little pigs, ‘cause when the skunk cabbage started to bloom, those piglets became miserable. Wheesa, who was a girl piglet and the spittin’ image of her Ma, and her two little brothers, Sniff and Snort, would begin getting’ itchy skin and watery eyes. They’d get a high pitched whistling sound in their chests, and snuffly noses. And at night – well, *Sniff sniffed, Snort snorted, Wheeza wheezed and all three of them began to cough something fierce.* In fact, those pigs raised quite a racket with all their coughin’.

Well, one day those piglets wiggled up to their Ma and Wheeza, the oldest, said, “Ma – we’ve decided it’s time we start out on our own and find another place to live.”

“But my dear piglets,” said their Ma, “Why leave? Hog Holler has been the family ancestral home for as far back as we can remember!”

“That may be true,” Snort replied, “But if we stay here this place will be the end of us.”

That's right Ma, " Sniff explained. "This swamp's just too hard on our breathing! In the dry season, there's dust. In the growing season, there's pollen. In the wet season there's mold. There's poison oak in the back yard and poison ivy in the front and more stinging insects than a pig can shake a tail at!"

"Yeah Ma," said Snort. "I'm tired of colds that never go away and waking up every night coughin'."

Well, their Ma could see that they had a point, so she packed them up some vittles, hugged and kissed each one and said, "Just don't forget to come visit now and then... and be careful out there!"

"We will Ma! Goodbye!" they called as Wheeza, Sniff and Snort went off to find their new home. It felt good to climb up out of the swamp, where the fresh air blew. And you know that in no time at all they found a nice little home in the middle of a meadow that looked as though it was woven just like a bird's nest.

"How pretty!" Wheeza said. "Let's move in here."

Being swamp pigs, they did not realize this home was an old hollow hay stack. They like the dappled light as it shown through the wall and all the fresh air that blew through the cracks. But by nightfall, they began to sniffle and itch and cough and wheeze.

"Oh no!" said Sniff. "I'm allergic to our new house."

"Me too!" said Snort.

And before Wheeza could answer, they heard a third voice respond " Well, then come on outside into the fresh air!"

"Who was that?" Wheeza whispered to her brothers, but they got their answer momentarily – for as the breeze wafted in from the front yard, *Sniff sniffed, Snort snorted, Wheeza wheezed and all three of them began to cough something fierce.* Their watery eyes met. If there was one thing that the Hog family was allergic to – more than anything else – it was wolf fur! So they clung to each other and tried to keep quiet.

"I said come on outa' there. I know there's someone in there!"

"Nobody in here but us crickets." Wheeza lied.

"Oooooh nooooo! I smell those three little swamp pigs. I'm sure I do!"
Just then - Snort began to sneeze again.

"I knew it!" sang the wolf. "Just when a wolf gets hungry! How nice of you pigs to move into the neighborhood. Now let's see - what's the best seasoning for swamp pigs?" The wolf reached into his pocket and pulled out some dried plants and herbs and

began huffing and puffing and blowing that seasoning right through the cracks in the straw walls and all over those piglets.

Sniff sniffled, Snort snorted, Wheeza wheezed and all three of them began to cough something fierce. There was garlic powder and parsley flakes flying everywhere.

“And now that you are properly seasoned, IT’S SUPPER TIME!”

The wolf huffed and puffed some more and more and more... until he blew the door in! He ran in to find – that those piglets had escaped out the back door and were nowhere to be found. Lucky for those pigs – this wolf was not the sharpest knife in the drawer. Meanwhile, those three little pigs had to hide in a hollow log that night and you can imagine how hard it was for them to keep quiet as they gasped for breath after running away from that wolf. Their little hearts were beatin’ fast.

Finally, when the daylight came, they carefully stepped out of hiding and went searching again for a better place to live. They came upon an unoccupied house on the edge of the forest that appeared to be made of sticks. Snort sniffed at the house cautiously.

“Well, this one doesn’t seem to make me sneeze.”

Sniff and Wheeza sniffed carefully and nodded. Wheeza went inside and declared “It’s got the same dappled light and fresh air as the last house.”

“I think it’s sturdier “ said Sniff.

Well, they decided to give it a try. So they moved in, had a wonderful dinner of collard greens and black eyed peas that their Ma had packed for them and were just settling down for their evening rest when... *Sniff sniffled, Snort snorted, Wheeza wheezed and all three of them began to cough something fierce.* They were coughing all around until they heard –

“Aha! I did find that little pig scent after all! They don’t call me the super sniffer for nothing! So come on out little pigs! IT’S SUPPER TIME FOR WOLFY!”

Those little pigs held their noses to prevent them from smelling that wolf any more then they already had.

“Not coming, eh? Well, let me see if I can help you. Hmmm – how do I like my bacon? Oh yes – SMOKED!”

And with that said, the wolf reached into his pocket and pulled out a cigar. He began huffing and puffing on that nasty smelling thing and blowing it right through the cracks of that stick house. Sniff sniffled, Snort snorted, Wheeza wheezed and all three of them began to cough something fierce. Those poor little pigs were coughing up a storm!

The wolf was hungry and in a hurry, so he kept up on the huffing and puffing until he blew in the door! Luckily for the pigs, that wolf was dumber than a box of hair, so they were able to escape again through the back door. They spent another miserable night in that old hollow log. By now, everything in that end of the woods smelled like cigar, so the wolf was unable to track them. The poor little pigs lay hiding, wheezing and shaking all night.

By the next morning, those pigs had resolve. They had purpose. They were also very stiff from spending two nights in a hollow log.

“That does it! “ said Snort. I’ve had it with that wolf, dust, pollen, smoke - all of it!” Let’s find ourselves a place that’s safe and helps us feel good too!”

So the pigs searched all day until they finally came across a sweet little rental that was clear of the woods, but outside of the city. It was built of brick to keep out the dust, smoke, pollen and mold, but it had windows all around to let in the fresh air whenever they wanted. Inside was perfect. No carpet or blinds to hold dirt and dust. No mold in the kitchen or bathroom. There wasn’t even any leaves to rake around the house or grass to mow— just evergreen trees that never lose their leaves and ground ivy which was definitely not the poison kind!

“We’ll take it” Wheeza told the landlord. The three little pigs moved in and set up housekeeping. They were so happy to have finally found a home where they felt good.

Every week, they took turns washing the sheets, blankets, curtains, and throw rugs to keep away the dust. They dusted the house and vacuumed too. They cleaned the bathroom and kitchen to keep the mold away. They would air out the house on clear days and keep the windows shut during hay fever season. Yes, life was good and those pigs were happy. Until one day, who should happen along while they were out back hanging the wash to dry (since sunlight kills the dust mites), but that mean old wolf.

“Well, well! If it isn’t my old friends, the three little pigs. I’m going to have to be sneaky this time if I want to catch all three of them.”

So that wolf went on down to the Goodwill and got himself a disguise. He picked up a pink dress, pink shoes, and a pink hat. He even invested in some smelly powders, perfumes and soaps. He got himself all dressed up and knocked on the door.

“Who’s there?” called Wheeza.

“Oh “ (the wolf caught his deep voice and sweetened it up) “I mean, Oh - it’s the Mary Fay lady, dear. I have some beauty products here you will just love.” Well Wheeza was mighty excited, seeing as how neighbors had yet to come a’callin’, so she opened the door. The wolf played it cool and began to show Wheeza one smelly beauty item after another. *Wheeza began to sniffle and wheeze and cough...*

Sniff and Snort heard voices, sniffed the air as pigs are known to do and... Sniff sniffled. Snort snorted.

“Do you smell that?” Snort asked. Sniff nodded. It was sort of a sweet, gooey, powdery smell all mixed up with...

“WOLF!” they both shouted. Those pigs went barreling around the side of the house, knocking the wolf right over and dashing inside, pushing Wheeza along with them. They slammed the door and locked it.

“Well, I didn’t want to buy that smelly stuff, but did you have to be so rude?” Wheeza demanded.

“I’ll show you rude!” Sniff squealed. “C’mon!” They ran to the upstairs window and looked down. There was the wolf, tearing off all those pink clothes as he circled the building, searching for a way inside.

“What’ll we do?” Wheeza cried.

“He can’t get in.” assured Sniff.

But they began to hear a scratching, scraping sound.

“He’s climbing up on the roof!” Snort exclaimed.

“The chimney!” Wheeza shouted. “He’s going to come down the chimney.”

“Not if we can help it!” Snort insisted.

Snort ran down stairs and began throwing all of their wooden spoons, mop and brooms - anything that would burn – into the fireplace. Then he started crinkling up bags and shoving them in there too and lit a match.

“Are you trying to cook him?” Sniff whispered, horrified. After all, they were strict vegetarians.

“No” said Wheeza. “I know what he’s doing! Think Sniff – what’s the one thing that really gets us coughing besides wolf fur and tobacco ...”

“Wood smoke!” Sniff interrupted.

“Thaaaat’s right!” Snort beamed and he closed the fireplace doors to trap all the smoke in the chimney.

And no sooner had they said that than the sounds started. *They heard a sniffing... and wheezing... and coughing... and what a racket – even howling!*” Well, by morning they finally opened the fireplace and looked – but there was no sign of the wolf anywhere. Word spread of the three brave little pigs and soon all kinds of animals came by to visit and thank them for getting rid of that nuisance wolf.

Some said that the wolf must have died of smoke inhalation. Others had heard that he had run off to another forest and was last seen running from a woodsman with an axe. Whatever the story – you can bet that those three little pigs breathed a lot easier after that. Yes, they slept sounder and lived happily ever after in their little brick house (except of course during the rainy season when they headed down to Arizona for the winter – but that’s another story!).

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Check out Allison Cox’s website at www.dancingleaves.com/allison/ and invite her to come tell in your community!