

Three wishes

The worst thing about being five is that everyone is older and stronger than me and they boss me about all the time.

There's only me left at the table and I can't get down until I've finished everything on my plate. Even the sprouts. Mummy is doing the washing up and has her back to me. I squash the last sprout under my plate.

"All gone," I say, pretending to wipe my mouth, but I'm in trouble when she picks up my plate.

She tells me how there wasn't much food when she was a little girl, not even bananas, and I should think of the starving children in Africa. I wonder what that's got to do with me not eating sprouts unless I could post the sprouts I don't eat to Africa. But then if I ate all the sprouts there wouldn't be any to send. I've noticed that grown-ups often don't make sense. I give in and hold my nose as she puts the squashed sprout in my mouth and I quickly wash it down with a glass of water trying not to be sick.

I run into the garden to play with Jonny. He's older than me and always gets to choose what we play. I want to play fairies and pixies but he says we are going to play wrestling and he's going to be Big Daddy. Of course he easily wins and sits on me and tickles me until I am laughing and cross at the same time.

Daddy calls us in as it's time to go swimming. Jonny can swim and jumps straight in making a big splash. I don't like the swimming baths – it's noisy and cold. My swimming cap smells funny and it leaves a red mark across my forehead. Daddy is teaching me to swim and keeps letting down my rubber ring. I don't like not being able to feel the bottom and I swallow a lot of water. My eyes are stinging. It's hard getting dressed. My legs are still a bit damp and my woolly tights keep getting twisted.

At bedtime Daddy reads me a story about a genie in a lamp who grants three wishes to whoever rubs the lamp. I know what I would wish for if I had three wishes. I would be strong like the Jolly Green Giant Ho Ho Ho! and beat Jonny at wrestling every time. At the swimming baths I would turn into a mermaid called Emerald with a shiny green tail and long green seaweed for hair. And sprouts would always taste of chocolate.