



COOK, MUG, COOK!

Once upon a time, there was a little cottage in a clearing deep in the dark forest. There were two orphans living there – Johnny and Annie. Their parents died, and so they had to take care of themselves. They learned how to wash their clothes, sew, and take care of the house. The forest was dark and mysterious, but it wouldn't let the two orphans starve, it offered them sweet forest fruits. But then winter came and the forest that had been full of yummy fruit was suddenly bare. There was only a strong wind blowing which made all the trees shake. Johnny was worried about their food supplies for the winter.

One day, when he went to gather wood, he heard a voice: "Help, help! Please, help me!"

Johnny ran towards the desperate voice deep into the forest, until he found an old swamp. The path was fading into the swamp and coming out on the other side. Crossing a swamp like that wasn't an easy task. In the middle of the mud, there was an old woman who got stuck and was screaming for help. She was wearing a backpack and she couldn't move an inch in the muddy swamp. Acting quickly, Johnny broke off a very long branch from a nearby tree and passed one end to the old woman and told her to hold on. Then he pulled and pulled with all his strength. Finally, he managed to free the old woman from the swamp.

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“Where were you going, ma’m?” asked Johnny, when she was safely back on the ground. “Well, I wanted to sell my clay pots at the market in town. My husband makes them and then I go sell them at the market. I was unlucky today, coming across this swamp and... this is how I ended up,” replied the old lady. In gratitude, she opened her bag full of clay pots and gave Johnny a small, ordinary-looking mug.

“Take this mug as a thank you for helping me,” said the old lady.

“Thank you ma’m, this is very useful, because we don’t have anything to bring water from the stream,” said Johnny gratefully.

But the old lady started explaining how to use the mug properly.

“It will be better if you don’t bring water from the stream in this mug. You might break it on a stone and that would be such a shame. This is not an ordinary mug. When you say, cook, mug, cook!, it will start cooking sweet porridge. And when you say thank you mug, that’s enough, it will stop cooking,” advised the old lady. Johnny was very pleased with this gift, he thanked the old lady with all his heart and happily ran home to his sister so that they could try the mug together.

He ran into the cottage, put the mug on the table and yelled: “Cook, mug, cook!” The mug shook and bubbled, and suddenly it was full of sweet porridge. They both took their spoons and started eating the porridge until their bellies were full.

“Thank you, mug, that’s enough,” said Johnny and the mug stopped cooking. The smell of the sweet porridge filled the cottage and Johnny and Annie ate much better than they had in a long time.

Since that day, Johnny and Annie lost all their fear of the long, cold winter. There was a fire crackling in their fireplace and heating up their little cottage, and on the table, sat their little mug, which always gave them sweet porridge to eat. This made the winters a lot easier since they did not have to worry about food. However, they were running low on wood, and so Johnny went back into the forest to get more sticks for the fireplace. In the meantime, Annie decided that she would clean up the little cottage. She sewed up the holes in their clothes, cleaned the floors and was starting to get hungry. She was wanted to wait for her

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brother to come back from the forest, but since he was taking a long time she decided to eat by herself. So Annie called towards the table: “Cook, mug, cook!” The mug shook and bubbled, and suddenly it was full of sweet porridge. Annie took a spoon and started eating. When she was full, she told the mug again: “Mug, that’s enough!”

But the mug kept going and Annie couldn’t keep up with it any more. It didn’t even help when she held a lid over the top with all her strength. The porridge was overflowing and covering the table. “Mug, stop it,” she shouted in vain.

But the mug kept cooking and soon the porridge had filled the whole cottage. “Mug, stop cooking! I don’t need more!”

But it didn’t help and the mug was cooking on and on. The porridge was flowing out of the cottage, creating a big, sweet lake in the yard. Annie tried many different magic words to stop the mug, but none of them worked for her. This was because she forgot the most important, most magic word of them all: Thank you. Completely frightened, she sat down in despair and started crying. In the meantime, her brother finally came back from the forest.

With effort, he waded through the porridge and shouted: “Thank you, mug, that’s enough.” In that instant, the mug stopped cooking and the porridge stopped flowing out of the cottage. Annie thanked her brother in tears for saving her from this sweet flood. She would never, ever forget the magic word thank you. For a long time after that, they had to clean the cottage and the yard from the sweet porridge. But at least they had something to do in winter.

The children always thanked the magic mug very nicely and it kept helping them for a long, long time.

The end.