



## THE GLASS HILL

Once upon a time, there were two brothers. The older brother, Martin, had so much money he could buy anything he ever wanted. He was rich, but his heart was as hard as stone and his mind was dark. His younger brother, Albert, was the opposite of Martin. He was always kind and helpful to everyone, no matter who they were, even though he was so poor he sometimes didn't even have food to eat.

On one particularly cold night, Albert went to his older brother's house to ask for help. It was the middle of the winter, and Albert had no coal for heat and no food to eat, so he asked his brother if he could borrow a bag of coal and a little food. He hadn't eaten in three days, he told his brother, but Martin didn't care that Albert was cold and hungry, and he laughed at him cruelly and slammed the door shut.

Albert decided to go to the forest to look for food. He wandered around the woods for what felt like hours, searching helplessly for anything he could eat, until it started to get dark and night fell. It was completely quiet except for the lonely hooting of an owl. Hungry and shivering, he sat huddled on the cold, hard ground and dreamed of a big, crackling fire, remembering how it felt to hold his hands up to the heat and not be cold. Suddenly, he remembered the

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story of the Glass Hill. Legend said that high on Glass Hill there was an ever-burning fire.

“Maybe if I found that, I would finally be warm,” Albert thought hopefully. And so he set off into the gloomy night in search for the fire that would never go out. Albert walked for hours and hours until, suddenly, he saw a bright light high up on a hill ahead of him. He knew he was in the right place. He climbed and climbed until he got to the top, where he saw twelve men sitting silently around a fire.

His voice shaking, he greeted them as politely as he could, saying, “Good people, please have mercy on me. I’m freezing; I’m poor and I have no heat in my cabin. Please, allow me to warm up by your fire.”

They all turned in unison and the man closest to him said, “Don’t be afraid. Sit with us and you’ll be warm soon.”

Albert gratefully sat down by the fire, which gave off a heat unlike any he had ever known. As he began to warm up, the men started humming, their voices becoming one, until sparks started flying out of the fire.

Albert stared at the fire as the face of an old man with a long white beard appeared in the sparks.

“You came to us humbly,” the old man said, “and you asked for our heat respectfully. Take as many of these burning embers as you can carry, and go home with our blessing. You will never be cold again.”

Albert didn’t know what to say, he was so happy. “Thank you, thank you!” he said, and he did what the old man told him. He opened his satchel and threw as many hot embers into it as he could. He thanked everyone again and hurried for home. As soon as he got home, he opened the squeaky metal door of his old wood stove and poured some embers inside. Albert jumped backwards as the embers started to spark, and when he peeked inside the stove he saw that each ember had turned into a nugget of gold. Thrilled, he poured in the rest of the embers. By the time he was finished, he had such a huge pile of gold on the floor that he couldn’t even imagine how much it could be, so he decided to go to visit his brother to ask to borrow a scale.

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Martin looked at Albert suspiciously and asked, "What do you need a scale for? Are you going to weigh your bad luck with it?"

Albert laughed nervously. "No, not my bad luck. I just need to borrow a bit of flour from my neighbour. I want to weigh it so I'll know exactly how much money I owe him."

Martin didn't believe him, but he agreed to lend Albert the scale and spread some sticky resin on the bottom of it. Albert took the scale home and quickly started weighing the gold nuggets. He had so much that he would never be cold or go hungry again!

When he returned the scale to his brother, however, he didn't notice some gold dust that had stuck to the resin on the bottom. Martin wiped the resin with his finger and looked closely at it.

"So you were weighing flour?" he asked. "Was it gold flour?" Martin looked at Albert accusatorially. "Where did you get gold? Tell me now, or I'll tell the whole village that you stole it," he threatened.

Albert was scared and told Martin everything, and even though Martin had no need for more money, he was consumed with jealousy and immediately set out to look for the Glass Hill.

When Martin found the hill, he climbed all the way to the fire on the top and saw the same twelve men sitting there. "Hey, you, over there," he shouted. "I'm cold! Why don't you hurry up and fill my bag with embers, so I can heat my house."

The men stayed still and didn't look at Martin. They began to hum, staring into the fire, until sparks started to fly. The old man with the long white beard appeared, just as Albert had said he would, and he looked at Martin and said, "You are greedy and you never give others anything, even though you have too much. You came here, you were rude, and you lied about having no heat in your house. You were born under a lucky star and you have had a comfortable life. However, you never learned to appreciate your good fortune and you refused to help others. You will be punished for that. When you go home, all your money and your riches will have turned to black stone."

As soon the man in the fire had reached his verdict, he disappeared. Martin

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screamed and he ran toward home as fast as he could to save his property. He ran faster than he had ever run before, but his efforts were in vain. When he reached home, every chest that had been full of money now only held black stones. In the cellar, where Martin kept food from his bountiful harvest, everything had turned into stone. Even the well was empty, except for a few black stones at the bottom. Martin fell to the ground and wept. When Albert came to visit him, he said, “Don’t despair, brother. I’ll share everything I have with you! After all, we’re family, and we should always help each other.”

And ever since then, the brothers have lived side by side and helped each other, and over time the older brother, who had lost everything he thought mattered, learned that love, humility, and kindness of heart are always more important than riches.