



THE MAGIC MILL

Far away in a distant land near the edge of the world, there lived two brothers. The older one was very rich, nearly drowning in wealth, while the younger one was as poor as a mouse.

But as rich as the first one was, he always hungered for more. He was a scrooge and he wouldn't share his wealth with anyone, no matter what. The other brother had to scrape the bottom of the barrel just to have something to eat, but he never thought twice whenever someone came to him for help.

One day, the poor younger brother had no choice but to go to his rich brother and ask for a little bit of food. He hadn't eaten anything for several days now and his stomach was rumbling like a thunderstorm.

He knocked at the door once, but nothing happened. He knocked twice, but still nothing. He knocked at the window, but still no response.

Suddenly a gnawed-clean bone flew out of the window and the scrooge shouted: "There you go, pick up that bone, take it and sell it to the Devil himself for all I care, just don't come bothering me again!"

The poor brother picked up the bone and thanked him politely.

He sighed and walked to a dark forest, hoping to find a devil so he could try to sell the bone to him. He was walking down a narrow path, when suddenly he saw a little imp standing before him. With pointy ears, a grey beard hanging all

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the way to the ground and big eyes peeping out from under a pointy hat, he was battering the ground with his stick.

“Where are you heading, squire, eh?” asked the imp.

“I’m not sure myself. My brother threw this bone at me and told me to go sell it to a devil. But I don’t even know where I should look for one,” sighed the poor man.

“Chin up, my boy, I’ll show you the way. Devils are crazy about them gnawed-up bones, indeed,” croaked the imp. “You need to stay on this path until you come to a fork. There will be two paths before you, with a large tree standing beside each of them. If you take the one with an owl sitting on the tree, you’ll soon reach a dark cave inside a rock. There you’ll throw a stone and a devil guarding the entrance to Hell will appear in front of you. If he sees the bone, he’ll immediately want to buy it from you, but take my advice: don’t you take any gold for it! Ask for the old rusty hand mill hanging on the wall,” advised him the imp.

The poor man thanked the old stranger and walked on. Soon he reached the place where the path forked into two, with large trees hanging over both of them. He looked at the tree on the left – but found nothing there. He looked at the one on the right – and there he saw an owl watching him from a branch. Right away he knew which path to take.

After a while, a towering rock blocked his path. Inside the rock was a dark hole radiating so much heat it was like a burning furnace. He picked up a rock and threw it in the hole. Immediately he saw sparks and smoke, and out of thin air a devil appeared in front of him.

“What do you want?” yelled the devil.

“I have a bone to sell,” answered the poor man with a wavering voice.

“A bone you say? And how much gold do you want for it?” purred the devil.

“I don’t want any gold sir, just that old mill hanging on the wall. I need to grind some flour, you see,” said the poor brother.

“You won’t get the mill, ask for something else,” snapped the devil.

But the poor brother insisted, just like the imp told him, until finally the devil agreed and went to get the old rusty mill. He grabbed the bone, handed over the mill and disappeared.

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The poor man set off on his way back home, walking through a carpet of leaves. When he was halfway there, he chanced upon the old imp once again.

“I see you’ve made a good bargain,” said the imp when he saw the rusty mill.

“I guess. I just don’t know why a mill like this would be any good to me. I don’t even have any grain I could grind,” replied the poor brother.

“It’s a magic mill, boy, it will grind anything you want,” revealed the imp. “But never forget, when you want it to stop, you need to say these words...” he walked to the man and whispered the words in his ear.

Ever since then, the poor brother was never short of anything. The mill always grinded whatever he wished for and when he had enough, he recited the magic words and the mill stopped.

But when the scrooge saw that his brother was faring better and better every day, jealousy started consuming him and soon he was bursting with envy. One day he couldn’t stand it anymore and decided to go see his brother.

“Tell me, little brother, where is all this fortune coming from? You know you can tell me, after all we’re brothers, are we not!” he said to his younger brother. The poor man had a heart of gold and told him everything about his trade with the devil.

“You better give that mill to me then! The bone belonged to me so the mill should also be mine. Give it, or I’ll tell everyone that you stole it!” hissed the scrooge.

“Alright, take it,” said his brother without hesitation.

The miser grabbed the mill and marched away. When he came home, his wife was just preparing dinner.

“Hold on a moment, wife. I went to see that fool who calls himself my brother and just like that, he gave me a magic mill. It will grind anything we want and you don’t have to cook ever again.” They both rejoiced how easy it was to rid the brother of his fortune. They threw away all the pots and placed the magic mill on the kitchen table. For dinner, they wished for the sweetest porridge in the world. And right away, the mill started grinding, and the porridge pouring down from it was so sweet they were wolfing it down by the handful. They filled two large bowls, all the pots and even the troughs in the stables, but the mill kept on

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grinding.

They left it out by a brook to let it grind into the waterbed. But the mill grinded and grinded and before dawn, the porridge replaced all the water in the brook. When the scrooge saw that the mill wouldn't stop, he took it back to his brother's house and dropped it in front of the gate. His brother waited until he left, then said the magic words and the mill stopped. He took it inside and made sure to always use it wisely.

Many years later, a pirate ship reached the nearby shores. When the pirates saw a wonderful house standing on top of the cliff where the younger brother lived, they wanted to know where so much beauty had come from. The goodhearted brother told them how he had once exchanged a gnawed-clean bone for a magic mill in Hell. When the pirates heard that, they returned to their ship to devise a plan to rob the man of the magic mill. With the stroke of midnight, they entered the house and stole the mill. When the brother woke up in the morning, the mill was long gone. The pirates had it on their ship that was already far at sea. And so they started discussing what to make with the mill.

One of them shouted: "Let's grind some salt first! It's hard to think on an empty stomach. We can season the fish with it. With our bellies full, it will be easier to figure out what to do next."

Everyone agreed, so they ordered the mill to grind the finest of salts. And the mill grinded away. The pirates filled every saltcellar on the ship and every barrel in the kitchen. When they had enough, they ordered the mill to stop. However, the mill kept on grinding and the pirates couldn't find a way to stop it.

Before long, the ship and its crew started sinking under the weight of the salt, until it sank to the very bottom of the sea. Because there was no one to stop it, the mill grinds and grinds somewhere deep in the ocean to this day and heaps of salt are pouring out of it. And that's why seawater is salty.