

Hiysi's Millstone

A long time ago, there lived 2 brothers. One brother was very rich, and had more than enough food for him and many others. The other brother was poor. He had barely enough food to feed his family.

The rich brother was friendly with his neighbors, and willing to share, but he always acted as if he didn't know his own brother. The rich brother was afraid that if he was nice towards his poor brother, he might want to share in his riches.

However, the poor brother never asked for anything, if he could help it. But on one holiday eve, the poor brother's wife came to him and said, "How are we going to celebrate this holiday? We have nothing to eat in the house. Go ask your brother for a little meat. I saw him slaughter his cow just the other day."

The poor brother did not like the idea of asking for help, but his wife insisted, and there was no one else to ask. He went to visit his

rich brother and said, “ Please lend me some meat brother, we have nothing to eat in our house for the holiday.”

The rich brother turned and threw a cow’s hoof at his poor brother. “Here, take it and go to Hiysi!”

The poor brother left with the hoof, thinking to himself, “ He has not given the hoof to me, but to Hiysi the Wood Goblin. I had better take it to him.”

The poor brother started off towards the forest. Along the way he met some woodcutters and asked if they knew where he might find Hiysi’s hut.

“Go straight ahead and never veer from the road in front of you. It will bring you right to his hut. But first you must listen to us. If Hiysi tries to give you gold or silver in return for the cow’s hoof, you must not accept it. Ask for his millstone, and nothing else.”

The poor man thanked the woodcutters for their kindness and continued on his way. No one is sure how long he walked, but after awhile, he eventually came to the hut of Hiysi the Wood Goblin. Hiysi looked at the stranger and asked, "What have you brought for me?"

The poor brother held out the cow's hoof. The goblin was overjoyed. He had not eaten meat in 30 years, and gratefully ate the cow's hoof whole.

"Now, I would like to give you something in return for you gift. Here, take these two handfuls of silver," offered Hiysi.

"I don't want any silver," said the poor man.

Hiysi then took out his gold, and offered the man two handfuls.

"I don't want any gold either. I want your millstone."

"Oh no! I cannot give you the millstone, but I will give you as much money as you want," Hiysi replied.

But the poor man remembered the kind woodcutter's words. He would not agree to gold or silver, only to the millstone.

"I have eaten the cow's hoof, and I suppose there's nothing I can do. So be it, you may take my millstone. But do you know what to do with it? This is no ordinary millstone. It will give you whatever you wish. All you must do is grind it and say, 'Grind my millstone!' And when you want it to stop, just say: 'Enough my millstone!' Now be off with you!"

The poor brother thanked Hiysi and began the long walk home through the woods. It was very dark and rainy, but the man walked on with the wind whipping at his face.

When the poor man arrived home the next morning, his wife was happy to see him. Her husband had been gone a long time, and she was afraid he might never return again. The poor man explained that he had been at the home of Hiysi the Wood Goblin. He took the millstone out of the bag and said, "Grind, my millstone! Give us nice things to eat!"

The millstone began to turn around and around. It poured flour, sugar, grain, bread, meat, and fish onto the table. The man's wife brought out stacks of bowls and plates for food. When she had filled everything she could with food, the poor man tapped the millstone and said, "Enough, my millstone!"

The millstone came to a halt. The poor man's family had as good a holiday as everyone else. And from that day on, they had everything they needed. The wife, children, and husband all had new shoes and clothes, and they never wanted for anything again.

One day, the poor man asked the millstone to grind him some oats for his horse. The millstone did so, and the horse stood by the house, eating its oats.

At the same time, the rich brother had ordered one of his workmen to take his horses down to the lake for water. As the workman did what he was told, he passed by the poor brother's house. The horses he was leading saw the oats and stopped to eat some. The rich brother walked out on his porch and yelled to the

workman, “Lead the horses away at once! They are picking up sweepings!”

The workman brought the horses back to his master and said, “You were wrong, those were not sweepings, but the choicest of oats. You brother has oats for his horses and many other nice things.”

The rich brother was curious. How was it that his poor brother had suddenly become rich? So he went to visit his brother.

“How have you become rich all of a sudden?” he asked. “Where have all these fine things come from?”

The poor brother did not hold anything back. He explained that he had brought the cow hoof to Hiysi, and in return, he had been given the magic millstone that gave him whatever he wanted.

The rich brother asked to see the stone. The poor brother brought out the millstone and ordered it to give them delicacies of all sorts. The millstone, once again, began to turn around and around.

To the shock of the rich brother, it turned out pies, cakes, meats, and fresh vegetables.

“Sell me the millstone!” begged the rich brother. “ Name your price, just sell it to me!”

“It is not for sale,” said the poor brother.

But the rich brother would not stop badgering him. He decided that instead of fighting with his brother, he would let him borrow the millstone for a short time.

The rich brother was delighted. He ran home with the millstone, without even asking how to turn it off when he was done with it.

The next morning, the rich brother took the millstone out in a boat with him. “They are salting fish just now,” he thought. “Salt is precious and I will make a lot of money by trading salt.”

In the middle of the sea, he tapped the millstone and said,
“Grind, my millstone! I need salt, the more the better!”

The millstone began to turn around and around. It poured out the whitest, purest salt the rich brother had ever seen. The rich man watched in glee and began to count out the profits he was sure to make at the market.

But by now, water began seeping into the boat, as the millstone turned out more and more heavy salt. As the boat began to sink under the weight of the salt, the rich brother finally came to his senses.

“Stop grinding, millstone! Stop grinding!” he yelled.

But the millstone went on grinding, as these were not the words needed to stop it. The rich brother tried to pick the millstone up and throw it overboard, but it seemed as if the stone was stuck to the boat, for it would not lift.

“Help!” screamed the brother. “Somebody save me!” But there was no one around to save or help him.

What happened to the millstone? It is said that it is still sitting at the bottom of the sea, still turning around and around making more salt. And, believe it or not, that is why seawater is salty!

Thinking About It

1. This tale, like most folktales, teaches lessons. What do you learn about *listening* from this tale? Explain which character teaches this lesson. What lesson can this tale teach us about taking care of our environment? Explain your thinking.

2. Partner with someone in your class. One of you will be a television news reporter. The other partner will be the poor man's wife. The reporter should interview the wife about the events she has witnessed. Perform your interview for the class or videotape it so others can view it.