



Magic Tales

Long Nose



Once there was a miller who had three sons and a farmer who had a pretty daughter. One day, Roland, the eldest of the miller's three sons, said, "I am going to ask Margaret to marry me today."



In the lane leading to the farmhouse he met Old Molly. She was wrinkled and bent, and very ugly. Unkind people called her Mad Molly, and said she was a witch.

“Good day!” said Old Molly. “And where might you be going?”

Roland stuck his nose in the air and walked past her as though she wasn't there. It was a wonder he didn't fall over his own feet.



“No!” said Margaret, when Roland proposed. “I will NOT marry you.”

A few days later, Robert, the second of the miller’s sons said, “I am going to ask Margaret to marry ME today.” He was quite sure he would succeed where his brother had failed.



Old Molly was gathering primroses in the lane leading to the farmhouse.

“Good day!” she said politely. “And where might you be going?”

Robert stuck HIS nose into the air and pretended to look at a bird which wasn't there.



“No! I will not marry YOU!” said Margaret when Robert asked her to marry him.

Robin was the third and youngest, of the miller’s three sons. He was kind and strong, but he had one fault. At least HE thought it was a fault. He had a very, long nose. A very, VERY long nose – the kind of nose that people laugh at. He wanted Margaret to marry HIM.



He met Old Molly by the farmhouse gate.

“Good day!” said Old Molly. “And where are you going?”

“On a hopeless errand,” sighed Robin. “How can I expect Margaret to marry me when I have such a ridiculous nose. She has refused my two brothers, she is sure to refuse me.”

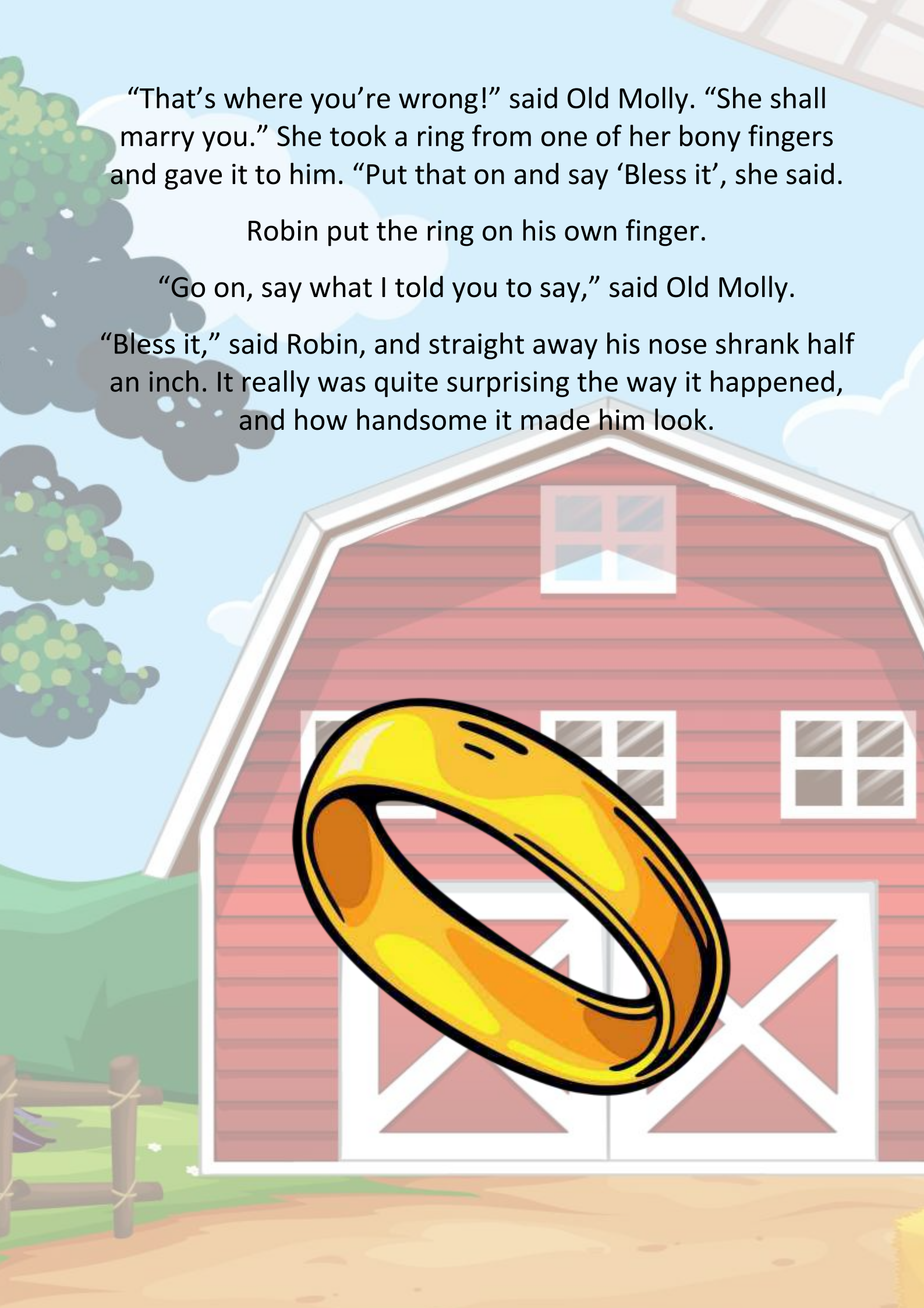


“That’s where you’re wrong!” said Old Molly. “She shall marry you.” She took a ring from one of her bony fingers and gave it to him. “Put that on and say ‘Bless it’, she said.

Robin put the ring on his own finger.

“Go on, say what I told you to say,” said Old Molly.

“Bless it,” said Robin, and straight away his nose shrank half an inch. It really was quite surprising the way it happened, and how handsome it made him look.



“If Margaret refuses to marry you,” said Old Molly, “Say ‘Drat it’ and then HER nose will grow half an inch. It will make her so ugly she will be glad to marry you.”

“Thank you,” said Robin. “I’ll ask her straight away.”

When he got to the farmhouse, Margaret was out.



“I’ll wait,” he said and sat down. He began to day-dream and presently he closed his eyes.

Now, it so happened that there was another visitor at the farmhouse that day. He was an old miser who never spent a penny unless he had to. He was very rich and Margaret’s father, who thought being rich was important, wanted Margaret to marry him. The miser saw Robin sitting with his eyes closed and he saw the ring on Robin’s finger.



“I’ll take that and give it to Margaret, then I will not have to spend money buying her a ring,’ he thought. And very slyly, and very carefully, he took the ring from Robin’s finger and slipped it onto his own for safe keeping.

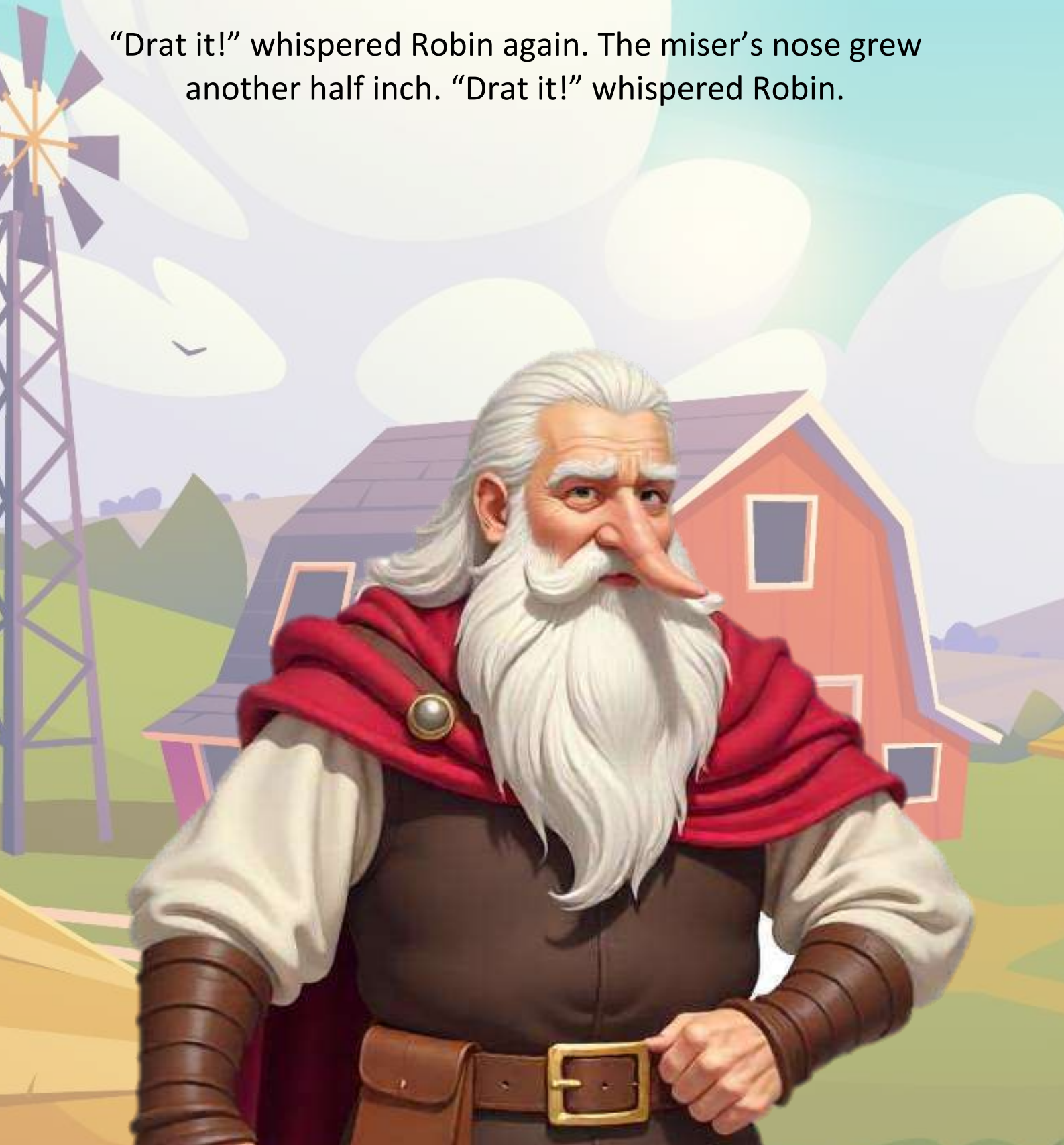
Robin might have had his eyes closed, but he wasn’t asleep. He knew exactly what the miser was doing. As soon as the ring was on the miser’s finger, he whispered, ‘Drat it.’”



“OOOH,” said the miser.

“Something has stung me!” He put his hand up to feel his nose, which was – you must have guessed – half an inch longer than it had been a moment before, “OOOOOOH! Something is making my nose swell!”

“Drat it!” whispered Robin again. The miser’s nose grew another half inch. “Drat it!” whispered Robin.



“What’s happening?” shouted the miser as his nose grew even longer. “I must find a doctor at once.” So away he rushed, trying to cover his nose with his hands. It wasn’t easy because the end kept poking through his fingers.



When Margaret came home, she told Robin she had always loved him, even when his nose was long. “Yes,” she said, when Robin asked. “I WILL marry you.”

The next time they saw the miser, his nose was still dangling like a parsnip.

“What AM I to do?” wailed the miser as he tried to prod his nose back into shape.

“Return my ring and give me a bag of gold, and I will cure you,” said Robin.



“Anything, anything at all,” promised the miser.

As soon as the ring was back on his own finger, Robin said, “Bless it!” He said it three times and each time the miser’s nose shrank half an inch. The miser was so relieved when it was back to its right size, he handed over the bag of gold without a murmur. There was enough gold in the bag for Robin and Margaret to set up house. Which goes to show, doesn’t it, that it is always wise to be polite, especially if you meet a witch.





THINK

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