



Magic Tales

The Giant and the Cobbler



Once there was a grumpy giant who didn't like anyone very much. But more than anyone else, he disliked the people who lived in the town of Shrewsbury. One day, he made up his mind, he would get rid of them all – ALL the men, ALL the women, ALL the children and ALL the babies.



Running close by the town of Shrewsbury, there was a river.

“I’ll dam the river,” said the giant, “and flood the town.

Then everyone who lives there will drown.”

It is very easy indeed for someone as big as a giant to dam a river. All he had to do is lift a spade full of earth – a giant spade of course – and drop the earth in the right place.



The giant was really rather stupid. Instead of waiting till he got to Shrewsbury before filling his spade with earth, which he could have done quite easily, he filled it with earth outside his own cave.

It was a hot day. And even giants get tired, especially when they are carrying a lot of crumbly earth they are trying hard not to spill. Somewhere, it must have been when he stubbed his toe on a boulder and almost dropped the earth on his own foot, he missed the way.



“I appear to be lost,” he said, and sat down beside the road – still holding the spade of earth – and waited for someone to come and tell him which direction to take.

Presently, a cobbler, who had been to Shrewsbury himself to collect all the boots and shoes that needed mending, came by.



“Hallo there!” boomed a voice high above the cobbler’s head. The cobbler thought at first a hill had spoken. “How far is it to Shrewsbury?”

The cobbler was surprised, but he wasn’t one to frighten easily and he thought to himself ‘Ho, ho, what can a giant like THAT be doing with a spade full of earth like THAT ... he’s up to not good, I’ll be bound.’ Aloud he said, “Why do you want to know?” “I’m going to dam the river and flood the town so that all the people who live there will drown,” said the giant.



“Something must be done about this . . . and quickly,”
thought the cobbler.

“Do you know how far it is to Shrewsbury?” he asked.

“I do not,” said the giant, and because he was lazy as well as
stupid, he added, “Not very far I hope.”



“I’ve just come from there myself,” said the cobbler, who was as quick-witted as the giant was stupid. “It’s been a very tiring journey I must say.” He opened his sack and tipped all the worn boots and shoes he had collected for mending onto the ground. “That’s how many boots and shoes I’ve worn out since I left Shrewsbury,” he said.



“Really?” said the giant, looking surprised.

“Yes, really,” said the cobbler, his fingers crossed behind his back because he wasn’t telling the truth.

“Then it must be a very long way indeed,” said the giant.



“Oh, it is,” said the cobbler with a tired sigh, although the town of Shrewsbury was just over the next hill and if the giant had listened carefully he could have heard the town hall clock striking the hour.

“I can’t possibly carry a spadeful of earth **THAT** far,” complained the giant.



“If I were you, I’d leave it here and go home,” said the cobbler putting the boots and shoes back into his sack.



“That’s good advice,” said the giant, and tipped the earth off his spade. It fell with a roar, like a cloud burst of dark brown rain, and when the brown dust had cleared, the cobbler was standing beside a new hill. The giant was scraping his boots with the spade. There was enough earth sticking to them to make a small hill beside the big one.



The giant went home and I'm glad to say, forgot about the people of Shrewsbury. The cobbler mended all the worn boots and shoes and returned them to their rightful owners. The two hills the giant made are there to this day. And so is the town of Shrewsbury, thanks to the quick thinking of a quick-witted cobbler.





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