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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The kite that went to the moon

Tom had made the biggest kite in the village; and Anna, had painted a big round moon on it and several stars as well. Tom felt very proud of himself when he ran to the village square to fly it.

"Stand back!" he said, as the girls and boys came crowding round him. "Now, you will see my kite fly to the moon!"

Tom was making a big fuss about his kite, but it is not every day that one has a chance of flying the biggest kite in the village, especially when you are only seven years old. He was very sad, however, when he saw that his kite had no intention of flying to the moon. Every time he threw it into the air, back it fell again on the grass; and although he tried again and again, any one could see that something was wrong with the biggest kite in the village. Tom turned red, and blinked his eyes, and reminded himself that he was seven years old. It was hard to swallow that he spent so much time on making the kite and it wouldn't even fly!

But when all the boys and girls burst out laughing, and pointed their fingers at him and began to tease, it was impossible to keep back his tears any longer. The children, however, only laughed more, when the little maker of the kite suddenly flung himself down on the ground and began to cry. He picked up his kite and marched off to the school to find Anna.

"My kite wouldn't fly," he remarked, and tried to look as though he did not care a bit.

"What!" cried Anna. "Your kite didn't fly?"

Tom clambered on the window ledge and sat there with his legs swinging. "All the string got mixed up," he explained. "I think that's why it didn't fly."

"I don't," said Anna, decidedly; "it was because the tail was too short. I told you so, all the time." "Let's go" said Tom.



"Where are we going, Tom?" asked Anna, when she joined him. "We are going out into the world, to discover the reason why my kite won't fly," answered Tom; and between them they picked up the biggest kite in the village and carried it out into the world.

"How are we going to discover why your kite won't fly?" asked Anna, when they had walked for a while.

"We will ask everybody we meet," said Tom. "Surely there is somebody in the world who can tell us, and we will not rest until we find him."

"How long do you think we shall have to go on walking before we find the right person?"

"Perhaps for years and years," answered Tom, cheerfully. "But if we are quick, we may meet him sooner than that."

It was beginning to grow dark now and they didn't see anyone. "The world is not so full of people as I expected to find it," said Tom, in a disappointed tone. "I do hope we shall soon meet some one who will know why my kite won't fly."

Then he heard Anna sobbing. "I'm so hungry," she said. "Can't we go home, Tom, and put off seeing the world until tomorrow?"

"I am afraid I don't know the way home," he said; "but if you will wait here, I will go and get you something to eat."

He was not sure where he was going to find it, but he hurried along the road as fast as he could. On the road he met a little old man, who was carrying a large sack on his shoulder.

"Well, my little fellow," he said in a friendly tone, "what do you want out of my bag?"

"That depends on what you have got in your bag," answered Tom.

"I have everything in the world in my bag," replied the little old man, "for everything is there that everybody wants. I have laughter and tears and happiness and sadness; I can give you riches or poverty, sense or nonsense; here is a way to discover the things that you don't know, and a way to forget the things that you do know. Will you have a toy that changes whenever you wish, or a book that tells you stories whenever you listen to it? Choose whatever you like and it shall be yours; but remember, I can only give you one thing out of my bag, so think well before you make up your mind."

"Do you have something to eat in your bag?" he asked. The little old man smiled and pulled out a small cake. The old man disappeared, sack and all, the moment he had given Tom the cake. So back trotted Tom to the place where he had left Anna.

"What a beautiful cake!" she cried; "it tastes like strawberry jam and toffee and ices, and all the things I like best. And see! As fast as I eat it, it grows back! Take a bite!"

"It tastes like currant buns and ginger-beer and all the things I like best. It is certain that we will never starve as long as we have a fairy cake like this." Then he told her how he got it.

"Perhaps," remarked Anna, "the little old man could have told you why your kite wouldn't fly."

"Perhaps he could," said Tom, "but I didn't think to ask him. We'll ask the next person instead."

When they looked round for the kite, it was nowhere to be seen. The moon came out from behind a cloud and helped them as much as it could; but although they searched for a long time, they couldn't find it.

"Perhaps I went to sleep while you were away, and somebody took it. But I did think I was awake"

"You were! It's not your fault" cried a voice from the hedge. Of course, no one but an elf would have appeared like that, just in time to say the right thing; so the children were not at all surprised when an elf came tumbling out of the hedge.

"Do you know where the kite has gone?" asked both the children.

"Look up there and see," answered the elf, pointing to the sky.

The sky was covered with stars, hundreds and thousands of them, all twinkling round the moon just as Anna had painted them on the kite. One of them was different from all the others; it had a long bright tail that glittered like a Christmas tree ornament and it was scurrying across the sky at such a pace that the rest of the stars had to get out of its way as best they could. Most of the people who looked out of their windows that night thought they saw a comet; but Tom and Anna knew better.

"Oh," they cried, clapping their hands with excitement. "There is our kite, and it is flying to the moon after all!"

"There's no doubt about that," said the elf.

"But why did it not fly to the moon this afternoon, when all the other boys were looking on?" asked Tom.

"Because there wasn't a moon to fly to, of course!" answered the elf.

"Then, if I had painted the sun on it, instead of the moon, it would have flown away this afternoon!" exclaimed Anna.

"You're right," said the elf. "Why did you paint the moon?"

"Well, you see, the moon is so nice and easy," explained Anna. "All you have to do is to draw a circle round the biggest plate you can find; and then you take away the plate, and you paint in the eyes and the nose and the mouth, and there you are!"

"Do you want to go to the moon?" asked the elf.

Anna looked round; and there was Tom still gazing up at the star with the long tail, that was causing so much commotion among the sky. Just then, it reached the moon and went straight into it with a big splash.

"Yes very much," Tom told the elf, "it's not the moon we want, it's the kite. And the kite has gone to the moon, I wish it had waited to take me with it."

"I shall have the greatest pleasure in taking you there. I'll call a comet at once." He put his fingers to his mouth and blew a whistle that was long enough to reach the sky. Down swooped a great shining comet. The children climbed on to its broad glittering tail and held tightly to each other. The elf took the steering wheel and then up they flew at a terrific pace, right through the wonderful blue darkness that stretched all round them. It grew lighter and lighter as they came nearer the moon. And there were less stars, for stars prefer to shine in a place where they can be seen. The elf landed the comet on the moon. The kids were amazed! The moon was beautiful. Tom was looking everywhere for his kite. Then something almost crashed into them.

"Why don't you look where you are going?" asked the kite. And the comet made a snarky comment back. A row was about to happen, when the somebody said: "Stop this bickering right now!"

"Oh oh!" muttered the elf. "I was expecting that. Goodbye, children; I'm off!" And pointing his hands downward, he took a dive from the head of the comet and disappeared in the direction of the stars. Then Tom

and Anna saw a tall figure, as white and delicate and shimmering as the light that surrounded it.

"Is it—can it be the man in the moon?" whispered Anna. Then the figure came closer, and they saw that it was a wonderful, mysterious-looking, white witch-woman. "I am the Lady of the Moon," she said, in the same clear, cold voice. "Snow and stillness and space are wherever I go; when I smile, I make the whole world beautiful, but my smile takes the colour away from the flowers and the ripple away from the water and the warmth away from the sunshine."

She looked round, and her eye lighted on Tom's kite. "What is that creature doing in my country?" she demanded.

"It is my kite. I made it, all by myself; and Anna painted the moon and the stars on it."

"I am afraid," said Anna, "that the moon is not very much like the moon, but it was the best I could do with three paints. The stars are alright," she added anxiously. The Lady of the Moon smiled. "Stars, indeed!" she observed. "What does it matter how the stars are painted? The moon is far more important, and you have made a regular muddle of that! Who brought you here?"

"The elf brought us," explained Tom. "He was here a minute ago, but he has just left. Please, may I take my kite back with me?" he asked boldly. "I want to show the other boys and girls that it did fly to the moon after all."

"Go, go, go! Dawn is coming, and you will be swallowed up in the setting of the moon," she screamed at them.

"Go, go, go!"

"Jump, Anna, jump!" he shouted. Tom and Anna were sitting on the top of the biggest kite in the village.

"Now," said Tom to his kite, "you take us home straightway!"

The sun was shining brightly, and the birds were singing, and the children were laughing on their way to school, when Tom and Anna at last reached home on the biggest kite in the village.

"Oh, oh!" cried all the boys and girls, rushing up to them in great excitement. "Tom and Anna have been sailing on the biggest kite in the village! Where have you been, Tom?"

"Didn't I tell you my kite was going to the moon?" Then Tom went home to breakfast; but the kite sailed back to the sky.