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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Giant's Cliff House

Once upon a time, there was a giant in Ireland named Mahon McMahon. He lived in the cliffs on the coast by the sea. Thomas Renardy lived nearby with his wife and child, Philip, who was a beautiful boy. One day, when Philip was seven years old, he disappeared without a trace.

There was a blacksmith in the nearby village named Robert Kelly. He was good at his work, but he was best known for his gift of being able to interpret dreams. People came from all over the land to seek his interpretation of their dreams. One night, the blacksmith had a dream of his own. He dreamed that he was visited by the seven-year-old Philip Renardy, who appeared before him on a large white horse. It couldn't be him, for it was seven years after his disappearance, and he should have been fourteen years old by then. But it was him.

"I am Philip Renardy," said the boy. "It was the giant Mahon McMahon who kidnapped me seven years ago when I was playing by the cliffs. I've been living with him ever since. In the giant's halls, those who serve him never grow old. We stay the same age."

The blacksmith asked why he had appeared in his dream. The boy told him how the years after the day of his abduction had passed. "Every seven years," he said, "the giant's door is open from midnight to sunrise.

There's only one way to reach his door, and that's by sea."

The boy begged the blacksmith to get a boat and row to the cliffs the next night and wait until midnight for the door to open. Then, he should enter and find the boy and take him with him. "Tomorrow, when my first seven years of service are over, is the only time you can do it," said the boy. "If you don't want to do it, I'll never be able to escape."

Kelly told the boy it was just a dream he had. Then the boy said, "I'll give you a sign that it's not just a dream, but an urgent message," and he let his horse give the blacksmith a kick on the forehead.



The next morning, the blacksmith woke up with a horseshoe print on his forehead, and then he knew it wasn't just a dream. The blacksmith didn't tell anyone about his dream, but he went to a friend whom he convinced to row out to sea with him at midnight. As the two men rowed to the cliffs at midnight, the blacksmith told his friend why they were there and what he hoped to do.

In the distance, they heard the clock tower strike twelve. Suddenly, the front of the cliff opened soundlessly. Steps were carved into the rock in the opening. They went up, and they were so high that the

men couldn't see where they were going. The blacksmith got out of the boat and climbed the stairs. His friend tried to talk him out of it, but the blacksmith said, "I have a sign on my forehead, and according to my dream, Philip Renardy is inside, and I'll find him." The blacksmith had brought one of his tools with him, a fire poker. He thought it might be used as a weapon and it gave him a little courage. When the blacksmith had climbed all the way up, he came into a large hall. In the middle of the hall was a table, and around it sat seven giants. They were all bent over as if they were in conference, but none of them moved or spoke. At the head of the table was a giant with a long beard, and he had been sitting there so long that his beard had grown into the rock that formed the tabletop. Robert Kelly stood there looking at them for a while, and when none of them paid any attention to him, he called out in a loud voice, "Where can I find Mahon McMahon?" At that, the giant at the head of the table was so startled that the act of pulling out his beard split the rock of the table into pieces, but none of the others moved. "I am Mahon McMahon," the giant cried. "And why do you seek me?" "I have come here to find Philip Renardy," the blacksmith said bravely, "and I have been told that you can tell me where to find him." "Oh yes, I can certainly do that," the giant said. He then led him to a large stone room on the other side of the hall, and it was glowing with fires, and inside there were a large number of young boys, and they were all engaged in some sort of metalworking. When

Mahon McMahon entered, they stopped their work and backed up against the wall. The blacksmith saw that none of them seemed to be older than seven years old. They all looked so much alike that they could have been brothers.

"If you are a friend of Phil Renardy, you can surely pick him out from all the others," the giant said. "And now look around you, and if you can tell me who he is at the first telling, you may take him with you. But if you cannot tell me, you will never go out again." This frightened the blacksmith, but he kept his wits about him and looked carefully from one boy to another, but he had no idea who Phil Renardy was because he had no clear memory of him.

To buy time, he said to the giant, "And are all these handsome boys your servants?"

"They are," Mahon McMahon replied, "and it has taken me a long time to gather them all together."

"You must be a good master," Robert Kelly continued, "because they all look very healthy, and I am sure you treat them well." He thought by talking in this way he might flatter the giant and put him in a good mood.

"You are quite right," the giant said. "And I am sure you must be an honest man, so let us shake hands." The big hand that the giant then extended did not give the blacksmith a good feeling. He would probably crush his hand, so he put his fire poker in the giant's hand. The fire poker was indeed crushed.

"You have a strong hand," the giant said, "but you need a stronger hand if you want to shake Mahon McMahon's hand." Then all the little boys burst into laughter, but

through their laughter, he thought he heard someone say, "Robert Kelly! Robert Kelly! I'm standing behind you." He quickly turned around and behind him was a boy who was not laughing. And in a flash, the blacksmith grabbed him and exclaimed, "This is Philip Renardy, and the one I am taking with me."

"I must admit," the giant exclaimed, "you have chosen well."

Then everything went dark, but Robert Kelly held onto the boy tightly. The next moment, they were lying on the grass at the top of the rock, with the boy next to him. "Are you really Philip Renardy, who has been missing for so long?" the blacksmith asked.

"Yes, I am," the boy answered, "but I would like to see my father and mother now."

They then walked to the boy's house, and the boy seemed to know the way better than the blacksmith. Mrs. Renardy immediately embraced the boy, and that convinced Robert Kelly that he had indeed taken the right boy. Shortly after his return, the boy began to grow again, but he never became very tall and there was always something strange about him. However, he got married and had children who were tall and strong. Robert Kelly became famous. People came from all over the country for his work as a blacksmith and for him to interpret their dreams.

The giant was never heard from again, and no more sounds came from the cliff house, so it was assumed that he had left that part of the land and chosen another place as his dwelling.