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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## The Sandman's Sand

Once upon a time, on a night with a bright moon and twinkling stars, the Moon Man played hide-and-seek with the little stars behind floating clouds. When the Moon Man hid behind a dark cloud, the earth would become dark, and the little stars would be afraid.

"Oh, Father Moon Man, please don't hide behind the dark clouds! We don't like the dark," pleaded the little stars.

"I have to hide sometimes," explained the Moon Man.

"If I don't, those naughty elves will steal all the Sandman's sand, and the world will be filled with wide-awake children."

Curious, the little stars asked about the Sandman's sand and the elves that steal it.

"Watch, and I will show you," said the Moon Man.

Rising high in the sky, the Moon Man smiled brightly, illuminating everything as if it were daytime. The little stars stopped twinkling and observed the earth intently with their bright eyes.

On the soft green grass behind a hill, the stars spotted a funny old man fast asleep. He wore a peaked green hood that almost covered his face, revealing only his long, sharp nose. A long green cloak was spread over him.

"Why does he have such a long, funny nose?" asked one little star.

"So he can follow it and find all the children who try to avoid him and keep the sand out of their eyes at bedtime," explained the Moon Man.

"Does his long nose always lead him to the wide-awake children?" inquired the little stars.

"Yes, my dears, always," replied the Moon Man.

"Sometimes the children try to hide, but his nose finds them. With one quick swing of his arm, he throws sand into their wide-open eyes, and they fall asleep."

Beside the sleeping man, there was an empty bag. As the Moon Man smiled upon it, the little stars saw the fairy Queen and her fairies come over the hill. They surrounded the Sandman and took his empty bag.

Opening it wide, each little fairy dropped a grain of sand, which appeared silver in the Moon Man's smile.



"What are the fairies putting in the bag?" asked the little stars.

"That is the sand the fairies make for the Sandman, my children," explained the old Moon Man. "That is why earth children sleep so sweetly and

soundly. Each grain of sand is given by a little fairy for a pleasant dream."

The little stars then asked about the naughty elves who steal the sand.

When the bag was full, the fairy Queen hopped into her little white lily carriage. The four white mice pulling the carriage ran up the hill, and the fairies followed. The Sandman continued to sleep, exhausted from chasing children who tried to hide from him.

Soon, the little stars saw hundreds of tiny green creatures approaching the sleeping Sandman. These were the naughty elves, just as numerous as the fairies had been. They carefully checked if the Sandman was sound asleep.

Confirming that he was, they nodded their heads and opened the sandbag beside him. One by one, they removed the silver sand grains that the fairies had put in the bag. They replaced them with something from their pockets, ensuring the bag wouldn't be empty. With that, the little green elves dashed up the hill, while the little stars wondered what would happen next.

At that moment, the old Moon Man hid behind a black cloud, temporarily obscuring the view of the elves. However, he emerged from behind the cloud, and the little stars observed the elves tumbling over one another down the hill and onto the startled Sandman, who woke up abruptly.

With his long cloak, the Sandman caught all the elves, covering them as they rolled at his feet. He gathered them in his cloak and gave it a vigorous shake, leaving the stars to wonder if the elves were all bumped and bruised.

Then, the Sandman opened his cloak and released the elves one by one. They returned the fairy sand grains

from their pockets, and the relieved elves scampered away, glad to escape the wrath of the angry Sandman. The Sandman slung his bag over his shoulder and ran away.

"Where is he going now, Father Moon?" the little stars asked.

"He is going to find the children who woke up and refuse to go back to sleep," replied the old Moon Man.

"That is when the naughty elves come into play, putting their bad-dream seeds in the Sandman's bag."

"Why does the Sandman leave them in his bag?" questioned the little stars. "Doesn't he know they are there?"

"Yes, he knows," explained the old Moon Man. "But the elves make their bad-dream seeds look so much like the fairies' sand that it's hard to distinguish between them. So, when the Sandman makes his second round to find the awakening children, he has to leave the bad-dream seeds in the bag alongside the good sand from the fairies."

"I would think all the children would be good and fall asleep the first time the Sandman comes around, and not wake up until morning," mused the little stars.

"They would if they knew everything you know, my children," replied the old Moon Man.