



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Magic Slate

Mary Graham Bonner

Witty Witch settled herself in the centre of the cave, and the elves, brownies, gnomes, and goblins arranged themselves around her to listen.

"There was once," she began, "a very naughty little gnome who loved his slate."

The gnome's favourite saying was that slates were the finest invention in the world. "Anything you write on them, you can rub right out again," he used to say. "I think I'll live my life the same way."

The trouble was that he didn't quite know how. Rubbing chalk marks off a slate was simple. Rubbing out the memory of knocking down a smaller creature — or the shame of pretending to know answers in school when he didn't — was rather harder. Still, he told himself he was sorry each time, and felt that was nearly the same thing.

In school he had a particular trick: when the teacher asked what he had written, he would say, "Oh, I'm sorry, Professor, I didn't realise you wanted me to keep it. I've already rubbed it off." This let him appear diligent without ever actually knowing anything.

One night he fell asleep tired and guilty — he had played instead of studying, and earlier he had knocked into a smaller gnome and told himself it was an accident. In his dream, Professor Gnome appeared, carrying an enormous slate. But this one was different.

"This slate cannot be cleaned by your sponge," said the Professor. "I have the magic rubber from the Fairy Queen. When your work is truly done correctly — when your mistakes have been truly made right — then and only then will I clean it."



In the dream, the gnome found himself back in the classroom. He tried to rub off what he had written, but nothing moved. He could hear the class laughing. Then it was recess, and the small gnome he had knocked down was crying, the bump on his head growing larger and larger until — in the strange logic of dreams — it was all that was left of him.

The gnome woke up.

"I can't rub everything out," he said aloud in the dark. "I shall have to actually make things right."

It was only a dream, Witty Witch reminded the children. But from that day on, the gnome worked and played as though every action was written somewhere that only real effort could clean.

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom