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The Miller's Boy and the Mermaid

A colorful illustration of a river scene. On the left, a wooden water wheel is partially submerged in the water, with a small house and trees in the background. In the foreground, a boy with blonde hair, wearing a brown tunic and a purple sash, stands on the grassy bank, looking towards a mermaid. The mermaid, with long brown hair and a pink flower in it, is sitting on a rock in the water, holding a golden knife. The water is blue with green lily pads and pink flowers. The scene is set in a lush, green environment.

There was once a poor miller's boy who lived by a river. One day, he was cutting reeds when his knife slipped and sank – *splish* – into the sparkling crystal water.

“How will I get it back?” he wondered.

A moment later, a mermaid with long, flowing hair appeared – holding a golden knife. “Is this yours?” she asked. The boy looked at it longingly, but shook his head.

The mermaid held up a silver knife. “How about this?” Again, the boy shook his head.

Finally, she held up a knife of rusty iron. The boy nodded. “That’s mine, thank you!”

To his surprise, the mermaid laid all three knives on the bank before him. “Honesty deserves a reward,” she told him, smiling, before diving back into the depths.

The miller’s eyes lit up when he saw the knives and heard the boy’s story. “Easy money,” he chuckled, hurrying outside.

Splish! Another knife sank into the water. “Oh no! How will I get it back?” he shouted.

Just as before, a mermaid appeared with a golden knife. “Is this yours?” she asked. The miller nodded, reaching out eagerly – but the mermaid snatched it away.

“There’s no reward for lying,” she snapped, sinking out of sight and leaving the miller empty-handed.

“I should have known,” he sighed. “Honesty is always best.”