



Why the Sea is Salty

A long, long time ago, when the sea was like a giant lake of fresh, clear water, there were two brothers, who both lived at the top of a tall cliff next to the sea.

One of the brothers was very rich, but the other was poor and humble. The poor brother would have to walk along the beach every day, combing for bits and pieces of whatever he could find to sell at the market for a few pennies. One day as he was walking along, he tripped over a small, hard object in the sand. He dug into the sand with his hands and discovered a large salt mill. When he looked inside, he saw there was a little salt left in the chamber.

“Lucky me!” he said to himself, imagining how delicious his potatoes would taste that evening. When he got home, he tried turning the handle of the grinder. He turned, and he turned, but the handle would not move. He turned and he turned, until he was red in the face. But the handle would not move. Finally, he got frustrated, tapped the salt mill and said, “Now grind!”

Then the handle began to turn on its own. Salt began to pour out of the mill and onto the table. The man was so surprised that he laughed out loud and scooped the salt into his hands. “This I can sell at the market!” the man said to himself, and thought of how he might no longer live in poverty.

When he saw that he had enough salt, he tried to stop the handle turning. But try as he might, there was nothing he could do to stop the handle. The little pile of salt turned into a big pile of salt and soon it was a heap of salt on the table. Still the grinder kept turning. Finally, he picked up the mill and shouted,

“Stop, please!”

All of a sudden, the handle stopped turning. So, each time the man wanted salt he would say to the mill, ‘Now grind!’ And when he wanted the mill to stop he would say, ‘Stop please!’ And every day he would go to the market and sell the salt. Soon the rich brother noticed some changes at the poor brother’s house a little way downhill. First, he saw a new fence around the garden. Then a little goat on a leash outside. Finally, a cow appeared. He decided to pay his brother a visit.

“Good day, brother,” he said. “And what, may I ask, is the secret to your new wealth?”

“I’m happy to tell you, brother,” he replied, and took the salt mill from the cupboard and put it on the table.

“Watch this,” he said. “Now, grind!”

And the handle of the mill began to turn, and salt poured out.

“And when I say, ‘Stop, please!’ the handle stops turning.” And so it did.

“Oh!” said the rich brother, his eyes widening.

“Brother, let me borrow the mill, just for one night and I will return it to you tomorrow.”

“Of course!” said the poor brother.

Now, the rich brother was devious and knew that the next day he would be going on his ship across the ocean to trade in another country. Without saying a word to his brother, he took the mill on board ship with him, knowing that he could make a fortune selling the endless supply of salt.

As soon as the rich brother set sail, he could hardly wait to test out the mill. So, he put the salt mill on his cabin table and said, “Now grind!” and the salt mill handle began to turn, and soon enough on his table was a little pile of salt. And the little pile of salt turned into a big pile of salt and the big pile turned in to a heap. The rich brother let the mill carry on turning and soon the big heap was a large mound on the table. Before long, the brother had to bring a whole barrel to contain the salt. And once the barrel was full, he gathered more and more items to fill with salt. Buckets and baskets and cans, and soon his cabin was filled with containers of salt. It began to get dark outside and the brother was beginning to get tired. So, he turned to the salt grinder and said,

“Enough now! Stop!” But the salt mill kept on grinding.

“I said stop!” said the brother, but salt carried on pouring out of the mill.

The man rushed to find something else to fill, but he found he had nothing left on the boat to fill with salt. Salt began to overflow onto the floor.

“Stop, I tell you!” he shouted. But the grinder would not stop.

Soon the cabin was filling with salt and the brother was forced to push open the door. Salt flowed onto the deck of the ship.

“Stop now!” he cried.

But the salt grinder would not stop. He ran up and down the deck as the salt kept on flowing.

“Stop!” he bellowed.

And whichever way he twisted and turned the handle, the salt would not stop flowing, and the ship began to creak under the weight of the salt. But in his greed, the brother would not let go of the mill.

“Stop! Stop! Stop!” he screamed.

But the salt would not stop, and he would not let go of the mill.

Finally, the ship began to strain and crack under the weight of the salt, and water began to rush on board. As the ship began to sink, the rich man realised his terrible mistake and threw the grinder over board.

To this day, the salt mill grinds salt under the ocean waves.

And that is why the is salty: because no one has told the mill to, 'Stop, please!'

