

LUX HALUS

Many, many years ago, near a humble village stood a magnificent castle, with tall high towers which stood proudly over great halls and richly decorated chambers. The people who lived in the castle were very rich and proud of their great wealth. They were also greedy, selfish and heartless, and gave no thought to the people outside their walls. Only the cook, who was a kind and gentle woman, fed the hungry, sheltered the poor and tended the sick.

One day it came to pass that the Heavenly Father ordained that the castle, and all the people who lived in it, should be no more. Only the kind and gentle cook would be spared. On the day of judgement, at the hour of calamity, she was given a sign. A little white mouse scampered across the kitchen floor, and settled softly on her foot. It was wearing a collar with a note attached. On the note was written the same message three times — “FLEE, NOW!”

She did.

Then the sky became dark. There was a terrible noise louder than the most terrifying thunder, and the whole earth shook. The tall high towers cracked, toppled and fell in a thousand pieces onto the great halls and richly decorated chambers. Angry red fire spurted out of the windows and the broken rooftops. The ground opened, and the walls fell inwards into the abyss, taking the entire edifice with them. With much grinding and groaning the sides of the chasm closed, leaving the kind and gentle cook looking upon bare earth where once a magnificent castle had stood.

Many, many years passed, and near a humble village stands a low and unassuming hill. It is well known in the village that once there was a great castle. Nobody knows who lived there or what happened to them, but everybody knows that a great treasure of gold and silver is buried deep under the hill. One day, three young men decided to find it. The three young men were not very fond of hard work. When they should have been ploughing the fields or harvesting, they preferred to sit in the tavern planning how they would travel the world and live well with their riches. They certainly didn't want to dig in the earth and carry stones to find their treasure. Fortunately, they had found the answer, or rather been given it by a little old man who told many tales of the strange things he had seen and done. He may even have been a wizard — or something else.

One evening in the tavern, the old man gave them a small book, which was very old and full of strange poems and incantations. It was a spell book, and the strange verses were very powerful spells. This one, for example, could make the person carrying the book invisible, and this one —. This one can summon a demon to find and fetch hidden treasure. Later that night, as it was getting dark, instead of going home the three young men went to the hill, taking the book with them. On the way, they discussed which demon they should summon

to fetch their treasure. Should it be Beelzebub, Urian or Lux Halus? Beelzebub wouldn't do because he always wanted a soul in trade for even the smallest favour. If they called Urian, he would always be there trying to catch them out. So, they settled on Lux Halus, who didn't appear to be as greedy, or dangerous, as the other two.

When they came to the place where they thought the treasure must be buried, the eldest, who was also the bravest, opened the spell book and found the right page. He lit a taper and started to read aloud while his two friends stood listening with open mouths and thumping hearts. At only the third line, there was a terrible grinding and groaning, and they all jumped back two paces. The earth opened where they had been standing, spurting out angry red flames. Through the flames sprang Lux Halus carrying a large heavy sack full of gold and silver coins.

If they expected Lux Halus to just hand over his treasure to them, they were very much mistaken. He set the sack firmly upright on the ground in front of them, sat on it, and smiled. But it wasn't a friendly smile. In fact, it sent a shiver all down their spines and froze them to the quick. The eldest, who was also the bravest, remembered that to send a demon back to from where it had been summoned, you had to speak the incantation backwards. He tried reading the spell backwards, but however many times he tried it didn't work. Lux Halus just sat there grimacing. His eyes burnt like hot coals in the dark, out of his now open mouth his tongue moved like a fiery serpent, and his sharp teeth promised a quick end to their short lives. The three young men had given up all hope of riches, but were too frightened to turn their backs on the demon and run. Lux Halus just sat silently on his throne of gold and silver, making terrible faces, and they were frozen in fear.

Just as their terror reached its greatest and they thought that they could endure no more, help came in the form of a devout little monk. He came from the dark forest into the light of the fire where he saw a strange sight. Three young men cowering in front of a terrible figure sitting as if on a throne, with flames rising from the earth like a tapestry behind it. The friar said nothing, but he observed the scene and listened as the young men begged and pleaded with him to save them. The demon just looked at him, grinned and went back to making terrible faces at the youths. The three terrified young men continued to beg and plead, and the devout little monk resolved to help them. He fell to his knees, turned his eyes to the ground, and started to pray. Lux Halus sprang back, and quietly, without argument, dropped into the chasm. The earth closed behind him, leaving the sack of gold and silver coins laying on the ground. In his prayers, the monk had made sure that the demon couldn't take *anything* back with him. But, the three young men didn't want the cursed gold either. They were just happy to be alive and safe, and free of the devil. So, to thank their saviour, they let him keep the sack and all its contents. With great effort and fortitude, the devout little monk carried his large and heavy burden back to the monastery. In time his fellow monks used the money to pay for the wonderful paintings which still hang in the village church to this day.