

Story 2146 (199 Tape 5)

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A Bargain with the Devil

There was a farmer who needed a hired man to help him with his work. He announced in several towns and villages that this job was available, but no one applied for it. The Devil became aware of this situation and he decided to apply for the position. He said to the farmer, "I am willing to accept the job that you announced, and I can do whatever work is required

The two then began to negotiate the terms under which the Devil would work. The farmer asked, "How much would you expect to earn on this job?"

The Devil answered, "I shall do any work of any kind which you assign to me without receiving any wages. But I have one condition. If you cannot find enough work to keep me busy, you will turn over to me all of your property."

The farmer thought, "I don't believe that he could possibly finish all the work I could give him to do." He did not yet know that he was dealing with the Devil,

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and so he accepted the condition demanded by this applicant

The farmer took the Devil to one of his fields and told him to plow and harrow all of it. The Devil began this work, but as soon as the farmer was out of sight, the hired hand called up a whole band of little devils to help him. As a result, the work which normally would take weeks was completed in just one day.

On the following day the farmer gave the Devil other tasks to complete. He ordered him to plant wheat in the newly plowed field. When this work was completed in three hours, he asked the Devil first to drain a swampy field and then to cut down all of the brush that had grown in a pasture lot. By this time the farmer realized his assistant was not an ordinary human being but some kind of demon or other supernatural creature. He realized also that he could not find enough work to keep such a creature busy much longer. At the end of that second day the farmer returned home deeply disturbed, for he would soon be committed to give all his property to his assistant.

His wife immediately realized that something was

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wrong. She asked, "What is the matter, my man? What is it that you are thinking about so deeply?"

"I hired a helper who agreed to do all the work I assigned to him. He asked for no wages, but he had one condition for his employment. He demanded that if I could not find work enough to keep him busy, I would surrender to him all of my property. When I accepted that condition, I believed that he was a human being, but I realize now that he must be a demon of some sort. He will soon take this farm and our other property.

His wife answered, "That is not as big a problem as you suppose. Nothing could be easier than getting rid of this creature. Send him to me tomorrow, and I shall manage that."

The farmer agreed to this, and on the following day he sent the Devil to his wife for his work assignment. She gave him two of her black hairs and a bar of soap. She said, "Take these two hairs to the river and wash them until they become bright and white. Then bring them back here to me."

The Devil took the two hairs to the river and began to wash them. He washed and washed and washed, but the

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hairs remained black. By late afternoon the hairs were still not white. The farmer's wife went to the river and asked, "What have you been doing? It is almost night, and you have still not finished this very small and easy job!"

The Devil answered, "I have not been able to finish this work yet."

The woman took off her head scarf and said to the Devil, "Well, be quick about it! You can see here how many other black hairs I have that need to be washed white."

Hearing that, the Devil jumped into the deep water at the center of the river, and he never came out again