

KNOCKOFFALY

the fable

Once there were three brothers who lived on **Aughrim Street**. The first two were good looking but rather selfish. The youngest, (named Michael) was so good-hearted and generous that people laughed at him and called him a fool. One day Michael was on his way to **Dame Street** with ten pounds in his pocket to do the day's marketing. On his way there he chance'd upon a rather elderly woman with a shabby pushcart.

"Have a wee sample, sonny?" she croaked in her old ratchety voice.

"Surely," said Michael, thinking it might be an apple or a pear slice. Instead, the hag handed him a rather battered-looking **floppy disk** that had obviously been recycled three or four times. She prepared to move on down the street.

"Wait," said Michael, "you should have something for your kindness." He handed her his ten pound note, since he had no change.

"God bless ye, sonny," said the hag, and shambled off.

“Ah the marketing!” exclaimed Michael to himself, “and me brothers wantin’ their tae** and me without a shilling!” He turned to head home and face the jeers of his brothers, but at that moment he spied a twenty pound note lying in the street. He looked for the owner, but there was none to be seen.

“Well, sure, there’s a bit of luck,” he said to himself. He did the marketing and arrived home. His brothers were well satisfied with their tea, having got twenty quid’s worth instead of a mere ten. As Michael cleaned his pockets that evening he remembered the floppy disk and thought to try it in his Macintosh Plus. Somehow his faithful little friend had been transformed into a PowerMac 8100 AV with all the bells and whistles. Not only that, but the floppy contained a little game called Knockoffaly that was quite entertaining. Michael invited his two brothers to play and then the three of them took the oldest brother’s Powerbook to the local pub and had a rollicking game with all the lads and their significant others. No one even noticed that Michael’s pint of Guinness was replenishing itself while they were all trying to buy Poolbeg Street.

That was the way it was for Michael after that. Women went nuts for him. He got an excellent job with a pension, married a fine dark-haired Colleen who was employed by Aer Lingus, and bought a house in the County Offaly. His brothers were a bit jealous. They remembered that Michael’s luck had started the day he got the Knockoffaly disk.

As it now fell to the second brother to do the marketing, he was doing just that when he met the hag with the pushcart on Aungier Street.

“Have a wee sample, sonny?” she implored.

“Surely,” replied the brother, “if indeed it is a free one.”

“Fáilte romhat,,”* replied the hag, with a strange look.

“My many thanks to you then,” said the second brother, and he snatched the disk and ran home with it. He did not find a twenty pound note on the way home. And the disk didn’t seem to work in his Mac. Cursing and swearing, the brother sent a scathing email to the hag on the internet. It didn’t matter much, because he soon came down with meningitis and lost all his teeth and the use of both his legs. Despite Michael’s pilgrimage to the shrine at Our Lady of Knock, the second brother’s condition did not improve.

Ill likewise befell the eldest brother, who was now compelled to do the marketing. When he encountered the hag and received a disk from her, he didn’t even bother to

thank her, being rather cross at the weather. When he got home, he found two burly gentlemen inside de-installing his **Powerbook**.

“What’s going on here?” he demanded.

“You have just been made redundant,” replied one of the tough looking lads, “and the boss wants to be sure you don’t bolt with the Company’s equipment.” Without even the satisfaction of his **Mac** for company, the eldest brother soon turned to alcohol, and went on the dole. He and the middle brother spent the rest of their days in the miserable flat on **Aughrim street** verbally abusing each other, while Michael prospered, had a large family, and lived quite happily.

The End

** “tea” in Irish Gaelic, but used often when speaking in English

* means “you’re welcome” in Irish Gaelic