GEORGE ELIOT

The Mill on the Floss

Retold by Florence Bell
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Brother and Sister

Dorlcote Mill was on the River Floss. The mill was a mile from the town of St Ogg's.

Edward Tulliver was the miller. He lived in the house next to the mill. The miller and his wife, Bessy Tulliver, had two children – a boy, Tom, and a girl, Maggie. Tom was eleven years old. Maggie was nine years old.

It was an afternoon in March 1828. Mrs Tulliver and Maggie were standing outside the house. They were waiting for Mr Tulliver and Tom. Tom had been away at school. He was coming back for the holidays.

‘Here is the horse and cart!’ Maggie shouted. ‘Here is Father. Tom is with him. Tom is back from school!’

‘Hello, Mother. Hello, Maggie,’ said Tom.

‘Oh, Tom, I’m happy to see you,’ Maggie said.

‘I’m happy to see you, Maggie,’ Tom replied. ‘I’m going to see my rabbits now.’

Maggie cried out. Her face was white. ‘I’ve got some money, Tom,’ she said. ‘Buy some more rabbits.’

‘More rabbits? I don’t want any more rabbits.’

‘Oh, Tom!’ said Maggie. ‘Your rabbits are all dead!’

Tom looked at Maggie. His blue eyes were angry.

‘You didn’t feed my rabbits, Maggie! You forgot?’

Tom shouted. ‘I hate you, Maggie! You are cruel!’

Maggie started to cry.
‘I’m sorry, Tom,’ she said. ‘Don’t be angry. I’m never angry with you.’
‘I never do anything wrong,’ said Tom. And he walked away into the garden.
Maggie ran into the house. Tom did not love her! She cried and cried.
Later, Tom came into the house. Mr and Mrs Tulliver were eating cake and drinking tea.
‘Where is Maggie?’ Mr Tulliver asked.
‘I don’t know,’ said Tom.
‘You must take care of your sister,’ said Mrs Tulliver.
‘Maggie came into the house,’ Tom said. ‘She was crying.’ He took a big piece of cake. He sat down and he started to eat it.
‘Crying!’ Mr Tulliver shouted. ‘Why was she crying? Go and find her!’
Tom went slowly upstairs. He went into Maggie’s bedroom. His sister was lying on the bed. She stood up and ran towards him.
‘Oh, Tom. I’m sorry about your rabbits,’ Maggie said. ‘I am a naughty girl.’
‘I forgive you, Maggie,’ Tom said. ‘Stop crying now.’
And Maggie smiled.