



## THE DEVIL AND TOM WALKER

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

### CAST

<b>NARRATOR #1</b>	<i>One Who Narrates</i>
<b>NARRATOR #2</b>	<i>Another Who Narrates</i>
<b>NARRATOR #3</b>	<i>Another Who Narrates</i>
<b>TOM WALKER</b>	<i>Greedy New-Englander</i>
<b>DEVIL</b>	<i>Strange, Hairy Man</i>
<b>WIFE</b>	<i>Tom's Wife</i>
<b>SPECULATOR</b>	<i>Ruined Land Investor</i>

**NARRATOR #1:** A few miles from Boston, Massachusetts, there is a deep inlet which terminates in a thickly wooded swamp. On one side of this inlet is a beautiful dark grove.

**NARRATOR #2:** On the opposite side the land rises abruptly from the water's edge, into a high ridge on which grow a few scattered oaks of great age and immense size.

**NARRATOR #3:** Under one of these gigantic trees, according to old stories, there was a great amount of treasure buried by Kidd the pirate. The inlet allowed a facility to bring the money in a boat secretly and at night to the very foot of the hill.

**NARRATOR #1:** The elevation of the place permitted a good look-out to be kept that no one was at hand.

**NARRATOR #2:** And the remarkable trees formed good landmarks by which the place might easily be found again.

**NARRATOR #3:** The old stories add, moreover, that the devil himself presided at the hiding of the money and took it under his guardianship!

**NARRATOR #1:** But as everyone knows, this is what he always does with buried treasure— particularly when it has been ill gotten.

**NARRATOR #2:** As for Captain Kidd, he never returned to recover his wealth. Shortly afterward he was seized at Boston, sent out to England, and there hanged for a pirate.

*(shouting of an angry mob)*

**NARRATOR #3:** About the year 1727, just about the time when earthquakes were prevalent in New England and shook many tall sinners down upon their knees...

*(rumbling of earthquake)*

**NARRATOR #1:** There lived near this place a meager, miserly fellow by the name of Tom Walker.

**NARRATOR #2:** Tom had a wife as miserly as himself. They were so miserly

that they even conspired to cheat each other. Whatever the woman could lay hands on she hid away.

**NARRATOR #3:** A hen could not cackle but she was on the alert to secure the new-laid egg.

**NARRATOR #1:** Her husband was continually prying about to detect her secret hoards, and many and fierce were the conflicts that took place about what ought to have been common property.

**WIFE:** And just where did you get that egg, Tom Walker!

**TOM:** None of your business, woman! This here egg is mine!

**NARRATOR #2:** They lived in a forlorn looking house that stood alone and had an air of starvation. A few straggling savin trees, emblems of sterility, grew near it.

**NARRATOR #3:** No smoke ever curled from its chimney.

**NARRATOR #1:** No traveler stopped at its door.

**NARRATOR #2:** A miserable horse, whose ribs were as articulate as the bars of a gridiron, stalked about a field where a thin carpet of moss, scarcely covering the ragged beds of pudding stone, tantalized and balked his hunger.

*(sad whinny of a horse)*

**NARRATOR #3:** Sometimes he would lean his head over the fence, look piteously at the passerby, and seem to petition deliverance from this land of famine.

**NARRATOR #1:** The house and its inmates had altogether a bad name. Tom's wife was

a tall termagant, fierce of temper, loud of tongue, and strong of arm. Her voice was often heard in wordy warfare with her husband.

**WIFE:** Where have you been, you worthless sack of nothing!

**TOM:** Leave me alone, you old shrew!

**WIFE:** I'll teach you to talk back to me!

*(sound of a slap)*

**NARRATOR #2:** And Tom's face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words.

**NARRATOR #3:** No one ventured, however, to interfere between them.

**NARRATOR #1:** If a lonely wayfarer happened by, he shrunk within himself when he heard the horrid clamor and clapper-clawing from within the house. Then he hurried on his way, rejoicing, if a bachelor, in his celibacy.

**NARRATOR #2:** One day that Tom Walker had been to a distant part of the neighborhood, he took what he considered a short cut homewards through the swamp.

**NARRATOR #3:** Like most short cuts, it was an ill chosen route. The swamp was thickly grown with great gloomy pines and hemlocks, some of them ninety feet high; which made it dark at noonday, and a retreat for all the owls of the neighborhood.

*(hooting of owls)*

**NARRATOR #1:** It was full of pits and quagmires, partly covered with weeds and mosses, where the green surface often betrayed the traveler into a gulf of black smothering mud.

**NARRATOR #2:** There were also dark and stagnant pools, the abodes of the tadpole, the bull-frog, and the water snake, and where trunks of pines and hemlocks lay half drowned, half rotting, looking like alligators, sleeping in the mire.

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom had long been picking his way cautiously through this treacherous forest; stepping from tuft to tuft of rushes and roots which afforded precarious footholds among deep sloughs; or pacing carefully, like a cat, along the prostrate trunks of trees; startled now and then by the sudden screaming of the bittern, or the quacking of a wild duck, rising on the wing from some solitary pool.

**NARRATOR #1:** At length he arrived at a piece of firm ground, which ran out like a peninsula into the deep bosom of the swamp. It had been one of the strong holds of the Indians during their wars with the first colonists.

**NARRATOR #2:** Here they had thrown up a kind of fort which they had looked upon as almost impregnable, and had used as a place of refuge for their squaws and children.

**NARRATOR #3:** Nothing remained of the Indian fort but a few embankments gradually sinking to the level of the surrounding earth, and already overgrown in part by oaks and other forest trees, the foliage of which formed a contrast to the dark pines and hemlocks of the swamp.

**NARRATOR #1:** It was late in the dusk of evening that Tom Walker reached the old fort, and he paused there for a while to rest himself. Anyone but he would have felt unwilling to linger in this lonely melancholy place, for the common people

had a bad opinion of it from the stories handed down from the time of the Indian wars—when it was asserted that the savages held incantations here and made sacrifices to the evil spirit.

**NARRATOR #2:** Tom Walker, however, was not a man to be troubled with any fears of the kind. He reposed himself for some time on the trunk of a fallen hemlock, listening to the boding cry of the tree toad, and delving with his walking staff into a mound of black mold at his feet.

**NARRATOR #3:** As he turned up the soil unconsciously, his staff struck against something hard. He raked it out of the vegetable mold, and lo! a cloven skull with an Indian tomahawk buried deep in it, lay before him.

**TOM:** What's this?

**NARRATOR #1:** The rust on the weapon showed the time that had elapsed since this death blow had been given. It was a dreary memento of the fierce struggle that had taken place in this last foothold of the Indian warriors.

**TOM:** Humph!

**NARRATOR #2:** He gave the skull a kick to shake the dirt from it. A gruff voice suddenly appeared in the air.

**DEVIL:** Let that skull alone!

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom lifted up his eyes and beheld a great black man, seated directly opposite him on the stump of a tree. He was exceedingly surprised, having neither seen nor heard anyone approach, and he was still more perplexed on observing, as well as the gathering gloom

would permit, that the stranger was neither negro nor Indian.

**NARRATOR #1:** It is true, he was dressed in a rude, half Indian garb, and had a red belt or sash swathed round his body, but his face was neither black nor copper color, but swarthy and dingy and begrimed with soot, as if he had been accustomed to toil among fires and forges. He had a shock of coarse black hair that stood out from his head in all directions, he bore an axe on his shoulder.

**NARRATOR #2:** He scowled for a moment at Tom with a pair of great red eyes and spoke with a hoarse and growling voice.

**DEVIL:** What are you doing in my grounds?

**TOM:** (*scoffing laugh*) Your grounds? They're no more your grounds than mine! They belong to Deacon Peabody."

**DEVIL:** Deacon Peabody be danged!

**NARRATOR #3:** The strange, dark man actually said something much worse, but we'll refrain from using it in mixed company.

**DEVIL:** But I'm getting ahead of myself. Deacon Peabody will be danged if he does not look more to his own sins and less to his neighbor's. Look yonder, and see how Deacon Peabody is faring.

**NARRATOR #1:** Tom looked in the direction that the stranger pointed, and beheld one of the great trees, fair and flourishing without, but rotten at the core, and saw that it had been nearly hewn through, so that the first high wind was likely to blow it down.

**NARRATOR #2:** On the bark of the tree was scored the name of Deacon Peabody. He now looked round and found most of the tall trees marked with the name of some great men of the colony, and all more or less scored by the axe.

**NARRATOR #3:** The one on which he had been seated, and which had evidently just been hewn down, bore the name of Crowninshield.

**TOM:** Crowninshield? I recollect a mighty rich man of that name. He made a vulgar display of his wealth. It was a rumor that he had acquired that money by being a pirate.

**DEVIL:** He's just ready for burning! (*growl of triumph*) You see I am likely to have a good stock of firewood for winter.

**TOM:** But what right do you have to cut down Deacon Peabody's timber?

**DEVIL:** The right of prior claim! This woodland belonged to me long before one of your white faced race put foot upon the soil."

**TOM:** And pray, who are you, if I may be so bold?

**DEVIL:** Oh, I go by various names. I am the Wild Huntsman in some countries. In others I am called the Black Miner. In this neighborhood I am known by the name of the Black Woodsman. I am he to whom the red men devoted this spot, and now and then roasted a white man by way of sweet smelling sacrifice. Since the red men have been exterminated by you white savages, I amuse myself by presiding at the persecutions of Quakers and Anabaptists. I am the great patron and prompter of slave

dealers, and the grand master of the Salem witches.

**TOM:** The upshot of all which is—if I am not mistaken—you are he commonly called Old Scratch.

**DEVIL:** The same at your service!

**NARRATOR #1:** Such was the opening of this interview, according to the old story, though it has almost too familiar an air to be credited. One would think that to meet with such a singular personage in this wild lonely place would have shaken any man's nerves: but Tom was a hard-minded fellow, not easily daunted, and he had lived so long with a termagant wife, that he did not even fear the devil.

**NARRATOR #2:** It is said that after this commencement, they had a long and earnest conversation together, as Tom returned homewards. The black man told him of great sums of money which had been buried by Kidd the pirate, under the oak trees on the high ridge not far from the morass.

**NARRATOR #3:** All these were under his command and protected by his power, so that none could find them but such as propitiated his favor. These he offered to place within Tom Walker's reach, having conceived an especial kindness for him: but they were to be had only on certain conditions.

**NARRATOR #1:** What these conditions were may easily be surmised, though Tom never disclosed them publicly. They must have been very hard, for he required time to think of them, and he was not a man to stick at trifles where money was in view. When

they had reached the edge of the swamp the stranger paused.

**TOM:** What proof have I that all you have been telling me is true?

**DEVIL:** There is my signature.

**NARRATOR #2:** The black man pressed his finger on Tom's forehead. So saying, he turned off among the thickets of the swamp and seemed to go down, down, down, into the earth, until nothing but his head and shoulders could be seen, and so on until he totally disappeared.

**TOM:** Hmmm.

**NARRATOR #3:** When Tom reached home, he found the black print of a finger burnt into his forehead, which nothing could obliterate.

**WIFE:** Where have you been? There's been some news in the papers! Absalom Crowninshield, the rich buccaneer, died suddenly. The papers said it all with their usual flourish—"a great man has fallen in Israel."

**TOM:** Hmmm.

**NARRATOR #1:** Tom recollected the tree which his black friend had just hewn down and which was ready for burning.

**TOM:** Ah. Let the freebooter roast. Who cares?

**NARRATOR #2:** He now felt convinced that all he had heard and seen was no illusion.

**NARRATOR #3:** He was not prone to let his wife into his confidence; but as this was an uneasy secret, he willingly shared it with

her. All her avarice was awakened at the mention of hidden gold.

**WIFE:** Well, this sounds simple! You must comply with the black man's terms! Secure us enough gold to make us wealthy for life!

**NARRATOR #1:** However Tom might have felt disposed to sell himself to the devil, he was determined not to do so to oblige his wife.

**TOM:** I'll not do it!

**WIFE:** You'll sell your soul to the Devil—or else!

**NARRATOR #2:** Many and bitter were the quarrels they had on the subject, but the more she talked the more resolute was Tom not to be sent to hell just to please her.

**WIFE:** Well, then I'll agree to the Devil's bargain! At least one of us has some sense. But then I'll be keeping my gain all to myself!

**NARRATOR #3:** Being of the same fearless temper as her husband, she set off for the old Indian fort towards the close of a summer's day. She was many hours absent.

**TOM:** I wonder what is keeping her. My interview with the Devil didn't take half this long.

**NARRATOR #1:** Finally she came back, but she was reserved and sullen in her replies.

**WIFE:** I met a black man—about twilight—hewing at the root of a tall tree. He was sulky though and would not come to terms with me. I'm supposed to go again with an offering next time.

**TOM:** What kind of offering?

**WIFE:** Nevermind.

**NARRATOR #2:** The next evening she set off again for the swamp, with her apron heavily laden. Tom waited and waited for her, but in vain.

**NARRATOR #3:** Midnight came, but she did not make her appearance.

**NARRATOR #1:** Morning, noon, night returned, but still she did not come. Tom now grew uneasy for her safety; especially as he found she had carried off in her apron the silver teapot and spoons and every portable article of value.

**NARRATOR #2:** Another night elapsed, another morning came—but no wife. In a word, she was never heard of more.

**NARRATOR #3:** What was her real fate nobody knows. It is one of those facts that have become confounded by a variety of historians.

**NARRATOR #1:** Some asserted that she lost her way among the tangled mazes of the swamp and sunk into some pit or slough.

**NARRATOR #2:** Others, more uncharitable, hinted that she had eloped with the household booty, and made off to some other province.

**NARRATOR #3:** While others assert that the tempter had decoyed her into a dismal quagmire on top of which her hat was found lying.

**NARRATOR #1:** In confirmation of this, it was said a great black man with an axe on his shoulder was seen late that very evening coming out of the swamp, carrying a bundle

tied in a check apron, with an air of surly triumph.

**NARRATOR #2:** The most current and probable story, however, observes that Tom Walker grew so anxious about the fate of his wife and his property that he sat out at length to seek them both at the Indian fort.

**NARRATOR #3:** During a long summer's afternoon he searched about the gloomy place, but no wife was to be seen. He called her name repeatedly, but she was nowhere to be heard.

**NARRATOR #1:** The bittern alone responded to his voice, as he flew screaming by—or the bull frog croaked dolefully from a neighboring pool. At length, it is said, just in the brown hour of twilight, when the owls began to hoot and the bats to flit about, his attention was attracted by the clamor of carrion crows that were hovering about a cypress tree.

*(cawing of crows)*

**NARRATOR #2:** He looked and beheld a bundle tied in a check apron and hanging in the branches of the tree; with a great vulture perched hard by, as if keeping watch upon it. He leaped with joy, for he recognized his wife's apron, and supposed it to contain the household valuables.

**TOM:** At least I will get ahold of my property and attempt to do without the woman.

**NARRATOR #3:** As he scrambled up the tree, the vulture spread its wide wings and sailed off screaming into the deep shadows of the forest. Tom seized the check apron, but, woeful sight! found nothing but a heart and liver tied up in it.

**NARRATOR #1:** Such, according to the most authentic old story, was all that was to be found of Tom's wife.

**TOM:** She must have attempted to deal with the black man as she has been accustomed to deal with me. Huh. I always thought a female scold was generally considered a match for the devil, yet in this instance she appears to have had the worst of it.

**NARRATOR #2:** She must have died fighting however; for it is said Tom noticed many prints of cloven feet deeply stamped about the tree, and several handfuls of hair, that looked as if they had been plucked from the coarse black shock of the woodsman. Tom knew his wife's prowess by experience. He shrugged his shoulders as he looked at the signs of a fierce clapper clawing.

**TOM:** Egad! Old Scratch must have had a tough time of it!

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom consoled himself for the loss of his property with the loss of his wife.

**TOM:** Well, I may have lost my property, but at least I lost my wife as well.

**NARRATOR #1:** After all, he was a man of fortitude. He even felt something like gratitude towards the black woodsman, who he considered had done him a kindness.

**NARRATOR #2:** He sought, therefore, to cultivate a farther acquaintance with him, but for some time without success.

**NARRATOR #3:** The old black legs played shy, for whatever people may think, he is not always to be had for calling for. He

knows how to play his cards when pretty sure of his game.

**NARRATOR #1:** At length, it is said, when delay had whetted Tom's eagerness to the quick, and prepared him to agree to any thing rather than not gain the promised treasure, he met the black man one evening in his usual woodman dress, with his axe on his shoulder, sauntering along the edge of the swamp, and humming a tune.

**DEVIL:** (*humming*) Oh, hello there. You again?

**TOM:** Yes. I've come to deal.

**DEVIL:** Deal? Whatever do you mean? (*humming*)

**TOM:** You know what I mean! I've come to make a bargain.

**NARRATOR #2:** The black man affected to receive Tom's advance with great indifference, made brief replies, and went on humming his tune. By degrees, however, Tom brought him to business, and they began to haggle about the terms on which the former was to have the pirate's treasure.

**DEVIL:** You shall have the treasure, but you must understand, it is generally understood in these situations where I grant favors, there is one condition that concerns your soul.

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom agreed to this, but there were others conditions which, though of less importance, the black man was inflexibly obstinate.

**DEVIL:** Any money found by me must be employed in my service.

**TOM:** Fair enough. What would you have me do?

**DEVIL:** Go into the black trafficking. Fit out a slave ship.

**TOM:** I absolutely refuse!

**DEVIL:** (*growling*) What?

**TOM:** Not even the Devil himself can tempt me to turn slave dealer!

**DEVIL:** Well, I did not expect you to be so squeamish on that point. But if you insist, there is another option.

**TOM:** Let's hear it.

**DEVIL:** You shall take my money and turn usurer, a moneylender. I am eager to see an increase of usurers—they are my special people, you know.

**TOM:** Hmmm. I have no objections to this. It is to my taste.

**DEVIL:** You shall open a broker's shop in Boston next month.

**TOM:** I'll do it to-morrow, if you wish.

**DEVIL:** You shall lend money at two percent a month.

**TOM:** Egad! So low? I'll charge four!

**NARRATOR #1:** The black man raised his eyebrows, impressed by Tom's bravado.

**DEVIL:** You shall extort bonds! Foreclose mortgages! Drive the merchant to bankruptcy—

**TOM:** (*eagerly*) I'll drive him to the devil!

**DEVIL:** (*evil laugh*) You are the merchant for my money! When will you want the rhino?

**TOM:** This very night.

**DEVIL:** Done!

**TOM:** Done!

**NARRATOR #2:** So they shook hands, and struck a bargain. A few days' time saw Tom Walker seated behind his desk in a counting house in Boston.

**NARRATOR #3:** His reputation for a ready moneyed man, who would lend money out for a good consideration, soon spread abroad. Everybody remembers the days of Governor Belcher, when money was particularly scarce. It was a time of paper credit.

**NARRATOR #1:** The country had been deluged with government bills. The famous Land Bank had been established. There had been a rage for speculating.

**NARRATOR #2:** The people had run mad with schemes for new settlements, for building cities in the wilderness. Land jobbers went about with maps of grants, and townships, and El Dorados, lying nobody knew where, but which everybody was ready to purchase.

**NARRATOR #3:** In a word, the great speculating fever which breaks out every now and then in the country, had raged to an alarming degree, and everybody was dreaming of making sudden fortunes from nothing.

**NARRATOR #1:** As usual the fever had subsided; the dream had gone off, and the imaginary fortunes with it. The patients

were left in doleful plight, and the whole country resounded with the consequent cry of "hard times."

**NARRATOR #2:** At this propitious time of public distress did Tom Walker set up as a usurer in Boston. His door was soon thronged by customers.

**NARRATOR #3:** The needy and the adventurous; the gambling speculator, the dreaming land jobber, the thriftless tradesman, the merchant with cracked credit. In short, every one driven to raise money by desperate means and desperate sacrifices, hurried to Tom Walker.

**NARRATOR #1:** Thus Tom was the universal friend of the needy, and he acted like a "friend in need;" that is to say, he always exacted good pay and good security. In proportion to the distress of the applicant was the hardness of his terms. He accumulated bonds and mortgages, gradually squeezed his customers closer and closer, and sent them at length, dry as a sponge from his door.

**NARRATOR #2:** In this way he made money hand over hand and became a rich and mighty man, and exalted his cocked hat upon change. He built himself, as usual, a vast house, out of ostentation; but left the greater part of it unfinished and unfurnished out of stinginess.

**NARRATOR #3:** He even set up a carriage in the fullness of his vain glory, though he nearly starved the horses which drew it; and as the ungreased wheels groaned and screeched on the axle trees, you would have thought you heard the souls of the poor debtors he was squeezing.

**NARRATOR #1:** As Tom waxed old, however, he grew thoughtful. Having secured the good things of this world, he began to feel anxious about those of the next.

**NARRATOR #2:** He thought with regret on the bargain he had made with his black friend, and set his wits to work to cheat him out of the conditions. He became, therefore, all of a sudden, a violent church goer.

**NARRATOR #3:** He prayed loudly and strenuously as if heaven were to be taken by force of lungs. Indeed, one might always tell when he had sinned most during the week, by the clamor of his Sunday devotion. The quiet Christians who had been modestly and steadfastly travelling Zionward, were struck with self-reproach at seeing themselves so suddenly outstripped in their career by this new-made convert.

**NARRATOR #1:** Tom was as rigid in religious, as in money matters; he was a stern supervisor and censurer of his neighbors, and seemed to think every sin entered up to their account became a credit on his own side of the page.

**NARRATOR #2:** He even talked of the expediency of reviving the persecution of Quakers and Anabaptists. In a word, Tom's zeal became as notorious as his riches.

**NARRATOR #3:** Still, in spite of all this strenuous attention to forms, Tom had a lurking dread that the devil, after all, would have his due. That he might not be taken unawares, therefore, it is said he always carried a small Bible in his coat pocket.

**NARRATOR #1:** He had also a great folio Bible on his counting house desk, and would frequently be found reading it when

people called on business. On such occasions he would lay his green spectacles on the book, to mark the place, while he turned round to drive some usurious bargain.

**NARRATOR #2:** Some say that Tom grew a little crack brained in his old days, and that fancying his end approaching, he had his horse new shod, saddled and bridled, and buried with his feet uppermost because he supposed that at the last day the world would be turned upside down. In which case he should find his horse standing ready for mounting, and he was determined at the worst to give his old friend a run for it.

**NARRATOR #3:** This, however, is probably a mere old wives fable. If he really did take such a precaution it was totally superfluous; at least so says the authentic old legend which closes his story in the following manner.

**NARRATOR #1:** On one hot afternoon in the dog days, just as a terrible black thundergust was coming up, Tom sat in his counting house in his white linen cap and India silk morning gown.

**NARRATOR #2:** He was on the point of foreclosing a mortgage, by which he would complete the ruin of an unlucky land speculator for whom he had professed the greatest friendship.

**SPECULATOR:** Please, Tom! Grant me a few more months on my debt!

**TOM:** No! I refuse you to keep this debt to me a day longer!

**SPECULATOR:** My family will be ruined and will depend upon the charity of the church!

**TOM:** Charity begins at home! I must take care of myself in these hard times."

**SPECULATOR:** You have made so much money out of me!

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom lost his patience and his piety.

**TOM:** The devil take me if I have made a farthing off you!

**NARRATOR #1:** Just then there were three loud knocks at the street door.

*(three loud knocks)*

**TOM:** That's odd! Who could that be?

**NARRATOR #2:** Tom stepped out to see who was there. A black man was holding a black horse which neighed and stamped with impatience.

**DEVIL:** Tom, you're come for!

**TOM:** I—I—I...

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom shrunk back, but too late. He had left his little Bible at the bottom of his coat pocket, and his big bible on the desk buried under the mortgage he was about to foreclose: Never was a sinner taken more unawares.

**DEVIL:** *(loud laughter)*

**NARRATOR #1:** The black man whisked him like a child astride the horse and away he galloped in the midst of a thunder storm.

*(thunder and horsehooves)*

**NARRATOR #2:** The clerks stuck their pens behind their ears and stared after him from the windows. Away went Tom Walker, dashing down the streets; his white cap bobbing up and down; his morning gown fluttering in the wind, and his steed striking fire out of the pavement at every bound. When the clerks turned to look for the black man he had disappeared.

**NARRATOR #3:** Tom Walker never returned to foreclose the mortgage. A countryman who lived on the borders of the swamp, reported that in the height of the thunder gust he had heard a great clattering of hoofs and a howling along the road, and that when he ran to the window he just caught sight of a figure, such as I have described, on a horse that galloped like mad across the fields, over the hills and down into the black hemlock swamp towards the old Indian fort; and that shortly after a thunderbolt fell in that direction which seemed to set the whole forest in a blaze.

**NARRATOR #1:** The good people of Boston shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders, but had been so much accustomed to witches and goblins and tricks of the devil in all kinds of shapes from the first settlement of the colony, that they were not so much horror struck as might have been expected.

**NARRATOR #2:** Trustees were appointed to take charge of Tom's effects. There was nothing, however, to administer upon. On searching his coffers all his bonds and mortgages were found reduced to cinders.

**NARRATOR #3:** In place of gold and silver his iron chest was filled with chips and shavings; two skeletons lay in his stable instead of his half-starved horses, and the

very next day his great house took fire and was burnt to the ground.

(or other evil, supernatural entity) in exchange for something.

**NARRATOR #1:** Such was the end of Tom Walker and his ill-gotten wealth. Let all griping money brokers lay this story to heart. The truth of it is not to be doubted.

**NARRATOR #2:** The very hole under the oak trees, from whence he dug Kidd's money is to be seen to this day; and the neighboring swamp and old Indian fort is often haunted in stormy nights by a figure on horseback, in a morning gown and white cap, which is doubtless the troubled spirit of the usurer.

**NARRATOR #3:** In fact, the story has resolved itself into a proverb, and is the origin of that popular saying, prevalent throughout New-England of "The Devil and Tom Walker."

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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1. What are some clues that Washington Irving intended this story to be humorous?
2. What are some examples of social commentary in this story?
3. Is the Devil (or "Old Scratch") painted in a serious or silly light? Explain.
4. What is the moral of this tale and other deals-with-the-devil stories? Explain.
5. A Faustian tale is a story in which a character makes a deal with the Devil. In the medieval legend of Faust, the titular doctor sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for unlimited knowledge. Is knowledge a nobler goal than money? Explain.
6. Write your own Faustian tale, where a character makes a deal with the Devil