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Blind person

The Woodcutter's Revenge on the Blind Men

There was a poor man once who lived in a small village. He made a living by bringing wood from the forests and selling it. One winter the snow was so heavy that all the paths to the woods were blocked, and his donkey could not get through the snow drifts. He was unable to bring wood to the village, and so he had nothing to sell.

After they had gone without food for several days, the woodcutter's wife said to him, "Go sell the donkey and buy food with the money. I think we may be able to survive until summer in that way."

The woodcutter did as the wife suggested. He sold the donkey and bought rice with the money. But the winter was long and the snow did not melt, and the food was all eaten before he could go to the forest again and bring wood to sell. "Well, my wife," said the woodcutter one night "we have finished all the food that we bought with the money from the donkey. What shall we do now to get food?"

The wife thought for a minute and then she said, "Take this copper cauldron to the market and sell it. We may still manage to survive until the summer with the money that we shall get for this cauldron."

The woodcutter took the copper cauldron to the village and sold it for thirty kurus. On the way home he met an old blind man who begged for alms from him. The woodcutter said to the blind beggar, "Father, I have only thirty kurus in my pocket, and at home I have a hungry wife and child." The woodcutter walked on, but after he had gone a few steps, the blind beggar started shouting, "Hey! Stop that man! He is a thief!"

The gendarmes heard the blind beggar's cry, and they rushed to him and

asked him what was the matter. "I had thirty kurus in my pocket," he said, "and the man who just went past here stole it from me."

The gendarmes caught the woodcutter and told him to return the money to the blind beggar. He tried to explain to them that he had not taken any money from the blind beggar, but when they searched him they found exactly thirty kurus in his pocket, and so they took it from him and gave it to the blind beggar.

When the gendarmes had gone their way, the woodcutter said to the blind beggar, "You blind scoundrel, I'll get even with you for this!" Instead of going home, the woodcutter altered his course and followed the blind beggar without saying another word. In the evening the blind beggar reached his home. When he unlocked his door and swung it open, the woodcutter quietly slipped into the house ahead of him. The blind man entered the house and barred the door. He went to a large cushion under which he kept his money, and he put there the money he had begged that day. He ran his hand over the pile of money under the cushion to be sure that it was all still there. Then he put the cushion back in place and went to bed. After the blind man was soundly asleep, the woodcutter went quietly to the cushion, took all the money from beneath it, and left the house without awakening the owner.

In the morning when the blind man got up from bed he went to check the money again, and he discovered that it was all gone. "What a fool I have been. I shouldn't have taken the man's thirty kurus in that way." He then dressed and went to the marketplace.

There he met two of his blind beggar friends, and he said to them, "Friends, I am very sad today. Yesterday I took thirty kurus from a man in an unjust way, and last night all my money was stolen. I think he may have followed me home and stolen it."

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"Where do you hide your money?" one of his friends asked.

"I hide it under a large cushion in my house," he answered.

The woodcutter was still trailing the blind beggar who had taken his thirty kurus and he was listening to this conversation. The blind men did not know that he was there.

"What a fool you are to hide money under a cushion," said the second blind man. "Feel this red walking stick in my hand? Well, it is packed full of gold. I never leave it anywhere. I keep it in my hand wherever I go."

walking stick -- hollow -- as hiding place for gold

The woodcutter heard all of this conversation. He went to a car-
penter and asked him to make a walking stick for him. He took the stick which the carpenter made and set out after the beggar with the red walking stick. He followed him for many hours without saying a word or letting his presence be known. After a while, the blind beggar came to a ditch full of water which he tried to cross. The woodcutter coughed then to let the beggar know that there was someone near who might help him.

"Will you please help me across this ditch?" asked the blind man.

The woodcutter jumped to the other side of the ditch and said, "All right, but stretch your stick across the ditch so that I can pull you over with it." As he pulled the beggar across the ditch, he yanked so hard that he pulled the stick right out of his hand.

When he was safely across the ditch, the beggar said, "Give me my stick back!"

"Of course you shall have your stick back," said the woodcutter. "What would I do with it?" But he gave him instead the stick which he had made at the carpenter's shop, and then he walked away. When he opened the red walking stick, he found that it really was packed full of gold.

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When the blind beggar reached home, he tried to unscrew his walking stick to count his money, but it wouldn't open. After trying for a long time to get it open, he at last called a neighbor to help him. The neighbor came and tried hard also to get the stick open. Then he said to the blind beggar, "Father, this stick doesn't come apart. It is all one piece of wood."

"I had a great amount of gold in my walking stick," said the blind man, "and now it is all gone."

The next morning the three blind beggars met again, and the one who had lost his red walking stick said, "Friends, I am ruined."

"What happened?" the other two asked him.

"Yesterday, toward evening, I was trying to cross a ditch filled with water. I asked someone to help me across. This person said, 'All right, but stretch your stick across the ditch so that I can pull you over with it,' I did as he told me, but he pulled the stick out of my hand. He gave me another stick when I asked for my red walking stick, and he must have taken the red one with all the gold in it. When I got home I had this other stick which will not come apart."

The third blind beggar said, "You two fellows are the two biggest fools I have ever known in my life. What a stupid thing to do--carrying money in a walking stick. Why don't you do as I do? Feel this waist-coat I am wearing. I sew all my money in the lining of this coat."

They were not aware that the woodcutter was still trailing them and was now listening to their conversation. The woodcutter said to himself, "These blind beggars are all scoundrels, I shall cheat this one too."

One of the blind men said, "Friends, there is no future for us in

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this place. Let us go away for thirty days and meet here on the first day of next month. I shall go to Istanbul. You go to Konya, and you go to Kayseri."

The woodcutter, who had overheard their plans, went to the market and bought a hive of bees. He could afford to do this now, for he was becoming very rich. He put all the bees in an earthenware pot and tied a cloth over the top of it. Carrying the pot of bees with him, he followed the blind beggar with the waistcoat full of money. When he caught up to this beggar, he said, "Peace be with you. Where are you going?"

"I am going to Konya," said the blind man.

"I am going to Konya, too," said the woodcutter. "I wish you would keep me company on the way, for I am blind."

"Well, I am blind too," said the beggar.

"All right, then, let us be friends," said the woodcutter.

They walked along the road for some time, talking as they went. After a while the woodcutter said to the blind man, "Father, will you hold this pot for me for a few minutes? I want to step off the road a way to urinate."

"What have you got in the pot?" asked the beggar.

"There is honey in it," answered the woodcutter.

The woodcutter went a way from the road and then he called out, "Where are you, father? I can't find my way back to the road." The blind beggar said nothing, for he had decided to take some honey from the pot and eat it before his companion could return. But when he lifted the cover off the pot, the bees flew out and started to sting him, getting inside his clothing. He ran from the spot, tore off his jacket and waistcoat, and threw them on the ground in an effort to get the bees off him-

self. The woodcutter ran to him, picked up the waistcoat full of money, and went home with it.

On the first day of the new month the three blind beggars returned to their home town and met as planned. The woodcutter had become very rich in the meantime, and he had bought a good horse and much furniture for his house. Again he went to the place where the blind men met and he listened to their conversation, just as before. They all told about their adventures, and the one who had lost his waistcoat full of money told them of this experience:

"On my way to Konya I was greeted by someone who claimed that he was also blind, but I think he was not blind. After we had gone a way, he said, 'Father, will you hold this pot for me for a few minutes? I want to step off the road a way to urinate.' 'What have you got in the pot?' I asked him. 'Honey,' he said. I decided to eat some of that honey before he could find his way back, but when I opened the pot bees flew out and started to sting me. They got into my clothing and stung me badly, and so I tore off my jacket and waistcoat and threw them on the ground. When I went to put them back on, the waistcoat was gone and so was my companion."

The three blind beggars decided that from then on they should always travel together, and they set out for Istanbul. Not far from their town they came to a stream. The woodcutter who had followed them at a distance on horseback rode up to them and asked, "Where are you old men going?"

"To Istanbul," they answered.

"Don't you know that this valley is full of bandits? They will kill you if they find you here."

One of the blind men said to the woodcutter, "Will you please help

us cross this stream?"

"I will on one condition, and that is that you will prepare to help me fight any bandits that attack us. When I yell 'Strike!' will all begin to strike about you with your sticks."

They agreed to this and the woodcutter helped them across the stream. When they reached the opposite bank, the woodcutter threw a rock into a pile of stones and caused a loud, clattering noise. he struck one of the beggars on the head with a pebble and yelled, "Strike! Strike!" When the beggars heard this they began to strike to right and left, beating each other with the blows of their walking sticks and sparing neither head nor face. The woodcutter left the three of them there fighting one another, and it is believed that they are still there fighting that way.