

Story 1580 (1977 Tape 1

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Location: Erzurum

Date: January 10, 1977

The Ungrateful Serpent¹

One day when a young man was traveling along his way, he saw a trunk from which he heard a voice coming. The voice was saying, "Is there no human being nearby who can rescue me from this trunk?" But as soon as the young man opened the trunk a snake jumped out and began to coil itself tightly about his neck.

The young man was greatly confused by what had happened. As the snake began to squeeze more and more tightly, the young man said to the snake, "What did I ever do to you that would cause you to treat me in this way? You were imprisoned in that trunk, and I released you from it. Will you kill me as my reward for saving you?"

The snake answered angrily, "Was it your business to save me? You should mind your own business."

The young man became confused even more now, and so he said, "O snake, let us go and get advice from someone else about this matter."

¹This interpolated story in ATON No. 1700 is a folktale in its own right. In order to avoid losing its identity entirely in that extremely long tale, we have (for indexing and cataloguing purposes) entered it here under its own ATON number.

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"Very well," answered the snake. The two of them proceeded along the road until they met an ox

The young man addressed the ox: "O brother ox, this snake was trapped in a trunk until I saved him from his imprisonment. But the moment it was released from the trunk, the snake coiled about my neck and tried to kill me. Did I do something wrong in opening the lid of the trunk and saving him from imprisonment?"

When the ox heard this, he said, "O brother snake, human beings drink a great amount of milk. Don't hesitate to strangle this young man. My master forced me to work very hard for fifteen years. But when I grew old and could no longer work as hard as I had in former times, my master decided to kill me so that he could eat my flesh and make shoes from my hide. He is having me graze here now so that he will get more meat from my carcass."

When the young man heard this comment, he really became very frightened. He said, "O brother snake, stop! Let us go and consult someone else about this matter

"All right," answered the snake

After they had traveled together for some distance the young man and the snake met a fox. The young man called the fox to his side and explained what the situation was. After

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he had explained everything that had happened, the young man said, "Now tell me, brother fox, do I deserve to be strangled by someone whose life I had saved?"

Speaking to the snake rather than to the young man, the fox said, "Human beings drink much milk. If you have the opportunity to strangle him, do not miss the chance to do so. These same human beings cause greyhounds to chase us. Then they kill us, give our flesh to the dogs, and wear our furs as coats. The human being is an ungrateful creature. Strangle him!" After a while, however, the fox took pity upon the young man and called out to the snake, "Stop, stop, brother snake! I want to ask you something before you kill him. I cannot believe that a snake your size could possibly have gotten into so small a trunk as the young man is carrying."

The snake answered, "It was not very difficult to do. I just coiled up very tightly in order to fit inside that trunk. Here! I shall show you

After the snake had uncoiled from the young man's neck, he wound himself up very tightly and squeezed into the trunk. As soon as he was completely inside the trunk, the fox closed the lid very tightly. In this way the snake was once again imprisoned.

Yes, sometimes a person may suffer as a result of his

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kindness, but kindness also has its rewards. It is not bad if a person you have helped does not appreciate your kindness, for eventually a helpful person will himself receive help when he needs it. There is a proverb which says, "Do a good deed and throw it in the ocean. Even if the fishes do not recognize it, God will." Help others without expecting any reward. God will know about the good that you have done. Your good deed as well as your evil act will be recorded in the Great Book, and sooner or later you will be rewarded for your good deed. Don't leave the right way during your Be compassionate, for God knows that your kindness is often unappreciated. After the Last Judgment you will be rewarded in the other world.