

The Woodcutter and the Axe



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One evening, a woodcutter was returning home from a busy day in the forest.

When he came to a river, he placed the wood and the axe on his back and began crossing the river on foot.

Suddenly, he stumbled on a large stone in the river bed and dropped his haul. In the blink of an eye, they were carried away by the current.

Depressed, he swam over to the other side of the river and sat on the bank to ponder his plight.

“What will I sell in the market tomorrow? How will I feed my wife and kids? Why are you punishing me, God?” he sobbed.





All of a sudden, a lady appeared out of nowhere. She inquired, "What happened? Why are you crying?"

The woodcutter replied, "Not only did I lose my day's work, but my axe floated down the river."

"Oh, is this your axe?" she questioned, handing him a beautifully decorated golden axe.

The woodcutter was poor but honest. "No, that's not mine," he answered.

"Is it this one then?" she asked, handing him an intricately carved, silver axe.

"No, that's not mine either," he truthfully responded.

"It must be this one then," she said, handing him a worn out, steel axe.

"Yes, that's mine," he acknowledged, his hands outstretched.

The lady was pleased with his honesty, and being a goddess in disguise, she handed him all three and sent the happy woodcutter on his way.

The woodcutter went home and told his wife what had happened, unaware that his sly neighbor, an eavesdropper, was listening in. "I told her that the golden and the silver axes did not belong to me, only the steel one," he explained.

As the neighbor was listening, his wife who had grown tired of calling him for dinner screamed, "Dinner is getting cold. Are you going to eat or should I throw it to the dogs?"

Not wanting to enrage his wife more, he left without listening to the rest of the story, thinking to himself, "What a fool he was. Had it been me, I would have gotten both the golden and silver axes."

And then it struck him. "Wait, I can still get them!"





The plan brewed in his head all night and he couldn't sleep in his excitement.

The next morning, he ventured into the forest to chop wood. That evening, he purposely dropped his steel axe in the river, and then sat on the bank and cried.

The lady appeared like the day before and offered him a golden axe.

"Yes, it is mine," he claimed, eyes glowing with greed. "There should be more."

"Is this yours too?" she asked, showing him a silver axe.

"Of course, it is" he insisted, eyes wide.

"How about this one?" she suggested pointing to a bronze axe.

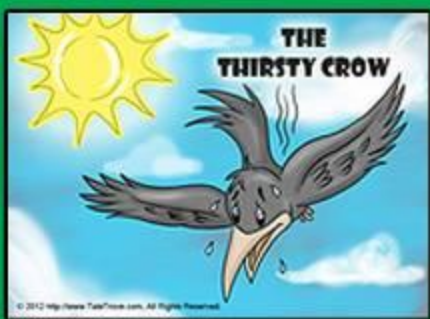
"That too!" he claimed.

"Liar! You will get your due!" the lady cried and disappeared with the axes.

Suddenly from out of nowhere, a swarm of bees began attacking the man. They stung him and left him writhing in pain.

And, as if that weren't enough misery, upon returning home, he heard an earful from his wife for losing his only steel axe.

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