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The Turnip

Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time, there were two brothers who were both soldiers. One was rich and the other poor. The poor man wanted to improve his life, so he became a gardener. He tilled the soil and sowed turnips.

When the seed sprouted, one plant was bigger than the rest. And this plant kept growing and growing. No one had ever seen such a large plant. Finally, the plant was so big that it had to be put on a cart. The cart was so heavy that two oxen could barely pull it. The gardener did not know what to do with it. He did not know whether the plant would bring him luck or misfortune. He thought, "If I sell the plant, I will not get more money for it and small turnips taste better to eat. Maybe it is best if I give the plant, as a sign of respect, to the king."

He hitched his oxen to the cart and drove the turnip to the king's court. "How amazing," said the king. "I have seen many strange things, but I have never seen anything like this. Where did you get that special seed or is it just luck that the plant grew so big?"



The gardener replied that he was not a lucky person but said that he was a poor soldier who always had too little to live on. He told how he had tried to change his life by becoming a gardener. "I have a brother who is rich, your majesty knows him well, the whole world knows him. But no one knows me, everyone forgets me."

The king took pity on him and said, "You will no longer be poor. I will give you so much that you will be richer than your brother." Then he gave him gold and land and a herd of animals. He made him so rich that his brother's fortune was nothing in comparison.

When the brother heard how a turnip had made the gardener so rich, he became very jealous and tried to think of how he could get the same luck. He decided to be even more clever than his brother. He would give gold and beautiful horses to the king. He thought that he would get an even greater gift in return. After all, his brother had already received a lot for a turnip.

The king gratefully accepted the gift and did not know what to give in return that would be more valuable than the large turnip. So the brother was forced to take

his gifts back home. He was furious, and evil thoughts came into his mind. He would kill his brother.

He hired a few thugs to murder his brother. He said to his brother, "I have found a hidden treasure. Let's dig it up and divide it." His brother had no suspicion of his evil intentions, so they traveled together to the place where the treasure was supposed to be hidden. Along the way, the thugs attacked him, tied him up, and went to hang him from a tree.

But while they were busy, they heard the sound of a horse's hooves in the distance. This made them so scared that they shoved their captive into a sack and hung the sack with a cord from the tree. Then they ran away quickly. The captive man wriggled around in the sack until he had made a hole big enough to stick his head out.

When a rider passed by, it turned out to be a cheerful student who was traveling. As soon as the man in the sack saw him passing underneath, he shouted, "Good morning, my friend." The student looked around but saw no one. "Who is calling me?" he asked.

The man in the tree called out, "Look up here, I am sitting in the sack of wisdom. I have learned wonderful things in a short time. Soon I will know everything that a human can know, then I will be the wisest person on earth. I have learned about the stars and the wind, about the coast and about healing the sick, about birds and about gemstones. If you were in this sack, you would gain a lot of knowledge."

The student listened in amazement and said, "Blessed is the day on which I found you. Can I not be in the sack for a while?" The man in the sack replied, "If you will reward me well, I have some space for you. But you have to wait an hour, first I have to learn some small things."

The student waited for a while, but he was very impatient because his thirst for knowledge was great. The man in the sack pretended to give in: "You have to pull the sack of wisdom down by loosening the cord, then you can get in." When the student had brought the sack to the ground, he freed the man. "Let me go up quickly now, please," he cried as he put his feet into the sack.

"Wait a minute," said the gardener, "that is not the right way," and he pushed the student's head into the sack, then the rest of his body, tied the sack shut and hung it from a branch with the cord. "How are you doing, friend? Are you already seeking wisdom? Have you learned anything? Rest there in peace until you are wiser than you were."

Having said that, the man turned around and left the screaming student behind to gather wisdom until someone came along.

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