

ENGLISH LITERATURE BOOK

(Supplementary Reader)

for

Class IX

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PUNJAB SCHOOL EDUCATION BOARD

Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali)

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Revised Edition 2021-22.....2,21,900 copies

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FOREWORD

The Punjab School Education Board has continuously been engaged in the preparation and review of syllabi and textbooks. The main objective of preparing language textbooks is to provide the students with interesting and appropriate reading material. This aims to equip the students with the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing so as to enable them to use these in their day-to-day life.

The Government of Punjab introduced English as a subject from Class I in the year 1998 due to a strong demand from the field. As a consequence, the Punjab School Education Board prepared new syllabi of English from Classes I to X.

The language package for class IX includes the Main Course book, the Literature Book (Supplementary Reader) and Grammar in Use. This Supplementary Reader is essentially designed to promote in the learner, love for reading by exposing him to good samples of English literature, holding up the mirror to different facets of life and to encourage the learner to read extensively on his / her own.

The book in hand has been prepared by Mrs Harjit Vasudeva, former Director, Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh and vetted by Dr Ramandeep Singh, Reader, Department of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and edited by Sh Manoj Kumar, Subject Expert (retired).

We would gratefully welcome comments and suggestions from teachers, experts and students as well to improve this book further.

Chairman

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ABOUT THE BOOK

(A Note to the Teachers)

This textbook, based on the new syllabus is a part of the package meant for class IX students. It comprises a Main Course book for intensive study, a Literature Book (Supplementary Reader) for extensive study and development of taste for reading and a functional grammar book for further developing different language skills. These books aim at making the teaching and learning of English an interesting exercise by presenting a variety of real-life situations. They also aim to fulfil the communicative, cultural and literary needs of the learner. The main objectives of teaching English at this stage are :

1. To develop communicative skills to enable them to perform different language functions.
2. To help them develop their cognitive and affective faculties.
3. To promote the skill of reading text intelligently and imaginatively.
4. To enrich the learner's vocabulary — both active and passive.

The course is learner-centred. The learner is also encouraged to think creatively through questions given in each lesson. There are different types of exercises : Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar & Usage and Composition.

1. Comprehension exercises are used for the teaching of factual comprehension which will deepen students' understanding of the lesson.
2. Vocabulary exercises are used for vocabulary enrichment and development of reference skills.
3. Grammar and Usage contain a wide variety of exercises on different areas of functional grammar.
4. Composition is used to help learners write well-knit pieces to help them comprehend non-prescribed material.
5. The exercises at the end of the poems aim at helping the learners appreciate the poem and enjoy reading it.

It is hoped that the textbook would meet the learners' needs and help them develop the important language skills and use English effectively and meaningfully for purpose of communication.

Manoj Kumar

Subject Expert (retired)

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1



THE MAGIC VIOLIN

Dr Anand Malik

An orphan lived in Sicily, Italy. He went around looking for work. He met a farmer who gave him the job of taking his goats to graze on the hills. Did the boy get paid for the work he did ? What happened when he wanted to leave the job ?

In Sicily, there once lived a boy who was always happy although he was very poor. His parents died when he was young so he set out by himself to seek his fortune. He laughed merrily at everything and all through his troubles he was cheerful and happy. He went about the country looking for work and at last one day he came to a farmhouse. He knocked at the door and the farmer came out.

“What do you want ?” the farmer asked angrily. He was a mean person and a miser and thought that the boy must be a beggar.

“I want work,” said the boy smiling. ‘And any kind of work.’

‘I see,’ said the miser less angrily and he saw a way of getting something for nothing. ‘Well, you can come and look after my goats.’

So the boy went to live in the farmhouse, and every day he took the goats to the hills to graze.

At the end of three years, the boy wanted a change of work because he felt lonely in the hills. When he came home at night, he never saw anyone to talk to but the old farmer. One evening, he told his master that he wanted to leave him. He asked for his wages that he had earned during the three years on the farm.

‘Wages !’ cried the farmer angrily. ‘Wages ! I never said anything about the wages when I gave you work.’

‘That is so,’ answered the boy, ‘but no one ever works for nothing. I did not settle the wages then because I thought you are a just man.’

‘And I *am* a just man,’ roared the farmer. ‘No one has ever told me that I was not that before. You shall see ! I will pay your wages even though I do not owe you any.’

Then he gave the boy three copper coins for three years' work. The boy looked at them and laughed. He put the coins in his pocket, took his shabby hat and went off whistling.

That night he slept under a haystack and in the morning when he woke up, he saw an old beggar in front of him. The boy smiled and said:

“Good morning, my friend, you are out of bed early.”

“I am,” replied the beggar. “I was so hungry that I could not have slept even if I had a bed of feathers to lie on. Can you spare me a copper coin or two ? I am so hungry.”

The boy put his hand into his pocket and took out the three copper coins that were his wages for three years.

“Take these,” he said cheerfully. “It took me a long time to earn them, but I can go back to the goats again and earn some more.”

As the beggar took the three copper coins, his rags fell from his body, and in their place appeared a black velvet cloak with silver work on it.

“You are a good lad, I see,” said the old man. “I am not a beggar. I am an angel. I can grant you two wishes. What do you want ? I can grant gifts to those who deserve them.”

The boy thought for a moment and said, “I would like to have a violin which plays music to make all men dance, and a gun that will always hit the thing at which I aim.”

The old man smiled and at once from beneath his cloak he brought out a violin and a gun. He gave them to the boy.

“May they bring you the happiness that you deserve !” he said and disappeared.

The boy made his way back towards the farm where he had worked for three long years for three copper coins, and just as he went near the gate, a bird flew up from a field. At once the boy aimed at it with his magic gun and, of course, hit the bird. As the bird fell, the farmer came out of the house and went to pick it up.

‘That is mine,’ he shouted.

“Certainly,” answered the boy. “But you may only have it by dancing for it.”

“I will have none of your rudeness, you rascal,” shouted the farmer. But before he could reach the bird, the boy began to play on his violin and the farmer had to dance. He danced and the boy would not stop playing.

“Stop !” shouted the tired farmer. “Stop, oh please stop ! I will give you a thousand pieces of silver if you only stop !”

“Let us go and fetch them first,” said the boy.

So, still dancing, the farmer went into his house and took the silver coins from beneath a board in the floor where he had hidden them; and the boy played on and on. It was only when the farmer held out the thousand pieces of silver to the boy that he stopped playing the violin.

Then he went on his way, but the farmer ran before him into the village and told the police that the boy was a thief.

The magistrate sent out the policemen and they soon caught the boy with the thousand pieces of silver that the farmer said he had stolen.

In those days, in Sicily, the punishment for stealing was death. It seemed impossible for such a poor boy to have such a large sum of money, so he was sentenced to be hanged at once.

The boy asked the magistrate to let him play the violin before he was hanged. The kind magistrate allowed him to do so.

The farmer cried out in alarm when he saw the hangman give the violin back to the boy and shouted to the magistrate:

“He must not play ! He must not play ! Oh ! Do not let him play !” But the magistrate only smiled and said :

‘It can do no harm. Let the poor lad play the violin for a few minutes; he is too young to die.’ So the boy began to play the violin. At once the magistrate and the hangman and the farmer and all the people who were gathered in the marketplace to see the poor boy being hanged, began to dance. They danced and danced and while the boy played, they could not stop dancing.

“Oh ! Oh ! Oh !” the magistrate cried. “I cannot go on, I cannot!” But he had to dance because he could not stop.

“Make him stop !” cried the tired farmer. ‘Make him stop ! He can have my thousand pieces of silver if he stops.’

“I shall die. I shall die !” cried the hangman. ‘I can dance no more, make him stop !’

But the boy played on, and the magistrate and the hangman and the farmer looked like dead people dancing for they had no strength left in them but they could not stop.

At last the magistrate cried, “Stop, boy, stop ! You shall go free. The farmer gives you the thousand pieces of silver and I give you your freedom.”

“Very well,” said the boy, tell the hangman to fetch my gun and silver pieces and I will stop.’

So the hangman danced away to the court house where the silver and the gun were kept. He returned with the boy’s things in his hands. The boy said:

Tie the gun to my belt and put the money in my pockets because I trust no one any more. I shall not stop playing until I have that which is my own and I am too far away from you to catch me again.”

When the gun was tied to his belt and the money was in his pockets, he began to walk away but he still played on the violin because he would not trust them.

The farmer and the magistrate and the hangman kept on dancing in the market place until the sound of the violin had died in the distance. Then they fell on the ground because they were all very tired. But the boy went on to find his fortune with his violin under his arm, his gun on his back and the thousand pieces of silver in his pockets.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>fortune</i>	:	luck
<i>troubles</i>	:	difficulties, sufferings
<i>mean</i>	:	unkind
<i>miser</i>	:	a person who does not like to spend money
<i>wages</i>	:	money earned by working for someone
<i>shabby</i>	:	in a bad shape
<i>spare</i>	:	give
<i>appeared</i>	:	came into sight, seen suddenly
<i>cloak</i>	:	a coat without sleeves
<i>deserve</i>	:	right to have
<i>rags</i>	:	torn clothes
<i>certainly</i>	:	sure, without doubt
<i>sentenced</i>	:	gave judgement
<i>alarm</i>	:	fear
<i>fetch</i>	:	go and bring

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Why did the boy go to the farmer ?
2. What did the farmer ask him to do ?
3. How much did the farmer pay him and when ?
4. Who did the boy give his three coins and why ?
5. What did the old man give to the boy ?
6. Where did the boy go then ? What happened there ?
7. Why did the magistrate punish him ? What was the punishment ?
8. How did the boy get the silver coins and his freedom back ?

C. DISCUSSION

The brain is mightier than a sword. Discuss.

D. SUGGESTED READING

‘The Five Continent Stories in Basic English’ By Dr Anand Malik



WISHES COME TRUE

Rabindranath Tagore

Sushilchandra wanted to do whatever pleased him—play all day, climb trees and miss school. Whereas his father Subalchandra longed to have his childhood back so that he could study. The Lady of Wishes decided to fulfill their wishes for some time. Were they happy with the change ?



Subalchandra's son was called Sushilchandra. But a name always does not reflect the person. 'Subal' means 'strong', but he was rather frail; 'Sushil' was not so well behaved, though his name means just that.

The boy was always annoying the neighbours with his pranks so his father would often run after him to punish him. But the father was rheumatic while the boy ran like a deer so the blows did not always hit the mark.

It was Saturday when school closed early at two o'clock but Sushil did not feel like going to school at all. There were several reasons for this. First, there was going to be a Geography test; and second, there would be a fireworks show in the evening at the Boses', for which they were going to prepare from the morning. Sushil had planned to spend the whole day there. So he went back to bed when it was time for school. His father came and asked, "What's wrong ? Why are you in bed ? Aren't you going to school ?"

"I've got a tummy-ache. I can't go to school today," said Sushil.

Subal could easily see that the boy was making it up. So he said to himself, "Wait, I must teach him a lesson." Aloud he said, "A tummy ache, is it ? Then you'd better stay at home all day. Hari can go by himself to see the fireworks at the Boses . And don't have any of those toffees I got for you. Just lie down quietly while I mix you some of that bitter medicine." He locked the boy in and went off to prepare it.

Sushil was in a fix. He loved toffees just as much as he hated the bitter medicine. And he also wanted to go to the Boses' house. When Subal Babu returned with the huge bowl of medicine, Sushil got up from the bed and said, "My tummy's stopped aching ! I think I'll go to school."

"No, no," said his father, "just drink this up and rest." He forced the boy to swallow the medicine, locked the door again and left.

Sushil cried the whole day and thought, "If only I were as old as my father ! I could do just as I pleased – no one could lock me up."

His father sat outside thinking, "My parents pampered me too much that's why I didn't get proper education. If I get back my childhood ! This time I'd study properly and not waste time."

Now the Lady of Wishes happened to pass that house and heard what the father and the son said. "Well, let me make their wishes come true for some time and see what happens !"

So she appeared before the father and told him, "You will have what you want. Tomorrow you will be your son's age." To the son she said, "You will be as old as your father tomorrow." Both of them were happy to hear this.

Old Subalchandra did not sleep well at night; he fell asleep only towards the morning. But today a strange thing happened; he leapt out of the bed at the crack of the dawn. He discovered that he had become very small. He had got back all his teeth and lost his beard and moustache. His clothes were now much too big for him.

Meanwhile our Sushilchandra just could not get up today. When at last he was woken up by his father's shouts, he found that he had grown so much overnight that his clothes had burst their seams. His face was covered with grey stubble, and he had also become bald. He did not feel like getting up at all. He yawned again and again. The noise by his father finally made him get up.

Their wishes had come true but it only made trouble for them. Sushil had always imagined that if he grew up and be free like his father, he would climb trees, dive into the pool, eat green mangoes, plunder birds' nests and roam around all day long. He would come home and eat whatever he liked, whenever he liked, with no one to scold him. But strange to say, that morning he did not want to climb a tree. He did not want to swim either. He thought he would catch cold and have fever. He rolled out a mat and sat there, thinking quietly to himself.

Once he thought he should not give up all games so suddenly, he should at least try. So he got up and tried to climb an *amra* tree nearby. As soon as he tried to pull himself up by a thin branch, it broke under his weight and he fell to the ground. Passers-by laughed loudly to see the old man playing childish pranks. With lowered head, he came back to his mat on the porch, called the servant and said, "Boy, bring me a rupee's worth of toffees from the market."

Sushil had always been fond of toffees. Every day at the shop near the school, he saw sweets of many colours, and bought some whenever he was given a few paise. He had always dreamt of stuffing his pockets with them when he had lots of money. Today his servant brought him a whole rupee's worth. He took a piece and started eating it; but the old man did not care for children's sweets. "Let me give them to my child-father," he thought but at once decided, "No, it'll make the boy sick."

All the little boys who had played *kabaddi* with Sushil till yesterday came as usual, saw the old man and ran away. Sushil had always thought he would play *kabaddi* with his friends all day long if he were as free as his father but now the sight of them only irritated him. "I am sitting in peace," he thought, "and here come these boys to bother me."

Subalchandra had the habit of sitting on the porch on his mat each day and think. "When I was young, I wasted my time in mischief. If I get my childhood back, I'd shut myself in my room and study quietly all day." But after getting his childhood, he did not like going to school. Sushil would ask him in the morning, "Baba, won't you go to school?" Subal would scratch his head, lower his eyes and say, "I've got tummy-ache, I can't go to school." Sushil would grow angry at this; "Oh, can't you? I also had lots of tummy-aches in my days when it was my time to go to school. I know your tricks."

Sushil began sending his little father to school by force. On returning home, Subal wanted to run about and play but at that time old Subal wanted to put on his glasses and read aloud from the Ramayana in a sing-song voice. Subal's noisy games disturbed him, so

he would make Subal sit down with his slate and do sums. They were such long sums that his father took a whole hour to do a single one. In the evenings, a group of old men gathered in Sushil's room to play chess. To keep Subal quiet at that time, Sushil hired a tutor who kept Subal busy till ten at night.

Old Sushil too got into all kinds of trouble. Nothing he had liked as a child agreed with him any longer. He used to take a dip in the pond. On doing it now, his joints grew stiff and swollen and he got rheumatism that took six months to cure. After that he bathed once every two days with warm water, and did not let Subal bathe in the pond either. If he jumped out of bed as he had done as a child, all his bones would ache. No sooner did he put a *paan* into his mouth, than he found he had no teeth to chew it with. By chance if he took up a comb, he would be reminded that he had no hair left.

Subalchandra, too, sometimes forgot how young he was. Imagining himself to be as old as before, he would turn up at old men's gatherings where they were playing cards or dice and begin to talk like a grown-up. They would box his ears and send him away saying, "Run away and play."

At last Subal began to pray earnestly "If only I were as old as my son Sushil, and free to do what I liked!" And Sushil would pray, "O Lord ! Make me as young as my father so that I might play again as much as I want to. I can't control my father any more. He's become very naughty and I'm worried about him all the time."

The Lady of Wishes now came again to ask, " Well, have you had enough of your wishes ?"

Both father and son bowed their heads as low as her feet. "Yes, mother, we've had enough. Please turn us back into what we were before !"

"All right," she said, "you will both be yourselves again tomorrow morning."

Next morning, Subal was the same old man as before, and Sushil woke up as the little boy he used to be. Both imagined they had been dreaming. Subal called his son and said, "Sushil, aren't you going to start learning your grammar ?" Sushil scratched his head and said, "Father, I've lost my book."

A. GLOSSARY

<i>frail</i>	:	weak
<i>annoying</i>	:	making people angry
<i>prank</i>	:	trick played on people as a joke
<i>rheumatic</i>	:	suffering from painful joints

<i>tummy-ache</i>	:	pain in the stomach
<i>make-up</i>	:	invent an excuse
<i>in a fix</i>	:	in a mess, in a bad situation
<i>pampered</i>	:	spoilt
<i>crack of dawn</i>	:	very early in the morning
<i>seams</i>	:	the line where two pieces of cloth are sewn together
<i>yawned</i>	:	to open the mouth wide and take a deep breath
<i>mischievous</i>	:	bad behaviour that makes people angry
<i>nothing agreed with</i>	:	made one feel ill or sick
<i>swollen</i>	:	become bigger than normal
<i>box ears</i>	:	pull someone's ears

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Why did Sushilchandra's neighbours get angry with him ?
2. Why did Sushil not want to go to school one Saturday ? What happened then ?
3. Why did the Lady of Wishes grant wishes to both the father and the son ?
4. What changes took place in Sushil ?
5. What happened to Subalchandra after his wish was granted ?
6. Why was Sushil kept busy in the evening ?
7. Was Subalchandra happy with the change ? Why ?
8. What happened when the Lady of Wishes changed them once more ?

C. DISCUSSION

Is it not necessary to be strict with children ? Discuss.

D. SUGGESTED READING

1. *Tales Told by an Idiot* by Mulak Raj Anand
2. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain

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IN THE FLOOD

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai

There were heavy rains. The village was flooded. Chenna Paraya left the village along with his family. His dog was left behind. Was the dog safe ? What happened to him ?



The temple was the highest point in the village. But it was neck-deep in water-water, water everywhere. The villagers had all left for dry land. There were sixty-seven children huddled up in one room in the attic of the temple. There were also three hundred and sixty-seven men and women, as well as dogs, goats and fowls. All living together. No quarrels.

For two nights and a day, Chenna Paraya had been braving the flood alone. He had no boat. It was now three days since his landlord left. Chenna Paraya had made a raised platform in the hut with coconut husks and poles. He stayed inside the hut for two days hoping that the water would recede. How could he leave the place so soon ! In the plot, there were a few trees of banana and a haystack, and leaving the place would certainly mean leaving them at the mercy of thieves.

Now the water had risen above the platform. It had sunk a part of the hut too. Chenna called out from inside. But who was there to listen to him ? His woman, who was pregnant, four kids, a cat and a dog were the only ones left there. And he knew his and their end was near as it would not take longer than a few hours for the whole hut to be submerged in water. It had been raining heavily and continuously for three days. Chenna came out of the hut by breaking open one row of the thatched roof and looked around. At some distance there was a catamaran. Chenna cried aloud to the boatmen. Luckily they heard him and came to help. He quickly pulled out his woman and kids as well as the cat and the dog through the crack of the wall.

The kids were getting on to the catamaran. "Chenna-cha, poohey," Chenna heard someone shouting from the west. He turned around. "Come on, here." It was Madiyathara Kunhappa calling from his rooftop. Chenna's wife also got on to the catamaran. So did the cat. No one took notice of the dog who was still sniffing around in one corner of the hut. The catamaran started moving. Now it was in mid-water again.

Heavy rain started again. By then his master had reached Ambalapuzha at night. A huge crocodile came near the house. The dog lowered his tail in fear and started barking. But the crocodile just went away.

The hungry dog howled from rooftop looking out into the dark and cloudy sky. His cries reached places far off. And those who were still guarding their houses must have said, "Ayyo, a dog is left alone on the housetop !" The dog cried out continuously for a long time. Then he was too tired to cry. From some house in the north, a man was chanting the Ramayana. For some time the dog turned towards the sound as if he was listening to the chant. Again he started crying. Soon nothing could be heard except the roar of the wind and the sound of the waves. It was early morning. The dog started groaning. (Frogs started looking at him amazed). He looked at the thatched roofs. They were his only hope. No fire burnt anywhere. Fleas bit him and he drove them away with his paws.

The sun shone for some time. He dozed off in the sunlight. He jumped and barked when he saw the shadow of the banana leaf on the rooftop. Then the clouds appeared. It was

dark once more. The wind stirred the water. The carcasses of animals floated around in the waves. The dog looked at them longingly.

A small boat was moving fast a little away from the house. The dog saw it, and stood up, wagging his tail. He watched till it disappeared. It started drizzling again. The dog stood on his hind legs. He looked helpless.

The drizzle stopped. A small boat came from the house in the north and stopped at the coconut tree. The dog wagged his tail and made noises. The boatman picked up a coconut from the tree, broke it and drank its juice. He then rowed off.

A crow sitting on a tree at a distance flew down on the carcass of a huge bull. Even as the dog was barking at it, the crow started eating the flesh of the dead animal. It took no notice of the dog. After some time it flew away.

In the afternoon, two men came that way in a small boat. The dog barked gratefully and wagged his tail. He wanted to get into the boat. "See, there is a dog," said one of them. The dog moaned. "Let it be there," said the other. The dog opened his mouth and groaned. He tried to jump into the boat. But the boat moved off. The dog groaned once again. One of the boatmen turned back.

"Ayyo."

The cry came not from the boatman. It was from the dog.

There was nothing to be heard after that except the sounds of the waves. No one turned back thereafter. Only the dog stayed, looking at the boat till it disappeared. He climbed on to the roof once again, growling as if bidding farewell to the world. Perhaps he was trying to say that never again he would love a human being!

The night was terrible with rain and storm. The roof started moving in the waves. The dog almost fell off the rooftop twice. Then there appeared a long head from under the water. It was that of a crocodile. The dog started barking in great fear. There was also the sound of fowls wailing together from somewhere nearby.

"Where is the dog barking from ? Haven't the people here gone away ?" Someone said from a boat carrying hay, coconuts and bananas. "Oh ! The dog is going to leap down." And then the dog leapt down from the rooftop. One of the men got frightened and fell into the water, but the other man pulled him out. By then the dog had swum back to the roof and continued barking. The thieves took away all the bananas in the plot. "You will be sorry for this later," they said to the dog who was barking madly. Then they loaded the boat with more hay. In the end, one of them climbed the rooftop. The dog bit him hard on the leg and he cried in pain. The other man gave the dog a blow on the belly with a pole. The dog wailed. The man bitten by the dog was crying in the boat. "Keep quiet," the other man said. Both of them left the place. It was quite some time before the dog barked again. He was in pain.

There was no sound except that of the storm. No one heard the groan of the dog after that. Rotten corpses floated across the water here and there. Crows were eating them. There was no sound at all. The thieves were having a nice time.

After some time the hut came down and sank. Nothing could be seen above the water. The loyal dog guarded his master's house till the end. Now he too was gone. The house stayed above the water until the dog was caught by a crocodile. It was as if the house did not go down before because of him.

Now the flood water was receding. Chenna came back, swimming to his hut in search of the dog. He found the body of the dead dog under a coconut tree. He turned it from side to side with his toe and examined it. He was not sure if it was his dog. One ear was bitten off. The colour had also changed as the body was all rotten.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>huddle</i>	:	to get close to one another
<i>attic</i>	:	a space or room under the roof of a building house
<i>fowls</i>	:	birds (e.g. hens) kept on a farm
<i>braving</i>	:	showing courage, facing
<i>recede</i>	:	become less, come down
<i>at the mercy of</i>	:	helpless, at the kindness of
<i>pregnant</i>	:	going to have a baby
<i>submerged</i>	:	went under water
<i>thatched roof</i>	:	roof made of dried grass
<i>catamaran</i>	:	a fast-sailing boat
<i>sniffing</i>	:	smelling
<i>howling</i>	:	crying loudly
<i>chanting</i>	:	singing
<i>groaning</i>	:	making sound in pain, crying
<i>amazed</i>	:	very surprised
<i>stirred</i>	:	moved
<i>drizzling</i>	:	raining in small drops, raining lightly
<i>wagging</i>	:	moving, shaking
<i>rowed off</i>	:	moved the boat away
<i>carcass</i>	:	dead body of an animal
<i>growling</i>	:	making low noise in the throat to show anger
<i>moaned</i>	:	made low noise in pain

<i>wailed</i>	:	cried loudly in pain
<i>leapt</i>	:	jumped
<i>belly</i>	:	stomach
<i>rotten</i>	:	decayed, spoilt

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Where did the villagers take shelter ? Why ?
2. Why did Chenna Paraya not want to leave his hut ?
3. When did Chenna Paraya leave his hut ?
4. How did Chenna Paraya leave the village ?
5. Who went with Chenna Paraya ?
6. Why did the dog cry continuously ?
7. How long was the dog alone in the hut ?
8. Did anyone help the dog ?
9. Why did the two men come to Chenna Paraya's hut ?
10. Why did the thieves hit the dog ?
11. What happened to the dog in the end ?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Was Chenna Paraya unkind to his dog ? Discuss.
2. Animals and birds should not be kept as pets. Give arguments in favour of and against this statement.

D. SUGGESTED READING

1. *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde
2. *My Family and Other Animals* by Gerald Durrell

* * * * *

4



A LETTER TO GOD

G.L. Fuentes

Lencho's crop was destroyed by heavy rain. So he turned to God for help. He wrote to God a letter asking Him to send him money. He received a letter from God along with some money. Who actually sent the money? What did Lencho do then ? Read on.

The House – the only one in the entire valley – sat on the crest of a low hill. From this height one could see the river and the field of ripe corn dotted with the flowers that always promised a good harvest.

The only thing the earth needed was a downpour or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lencho – who knew his fields intimately – had done nothing else but seen the sky toward the northeast.

“Now we’re really going to get some water, woman.”

The woman, who was preparing supper, replied: “Yes, God willing.”

The older boys were working in the field while the smaller ones were playing near the house, until the woman called to them all : “Come for dinner

It was during the meal that, just as Lencho had predicted, big drops of rain began to fall. In the northeast huge mountains of clouds could be seen approaching. The air was fresh and sweet.

The man went out for no other reason than to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body and when he returned, he exclaimed :

“These aren’t raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten-cent pieces and the little ones are fives...”

With a satisfied expression, he regarded the field of ripe corn with its flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. But suddenly a strong wind began to blow and along with the rain very large hailstones began to fall. These truly did resemble new silver coins. The boys, exposing themselves to the rain, ran out to collect the frozen pearls.

“It is really getting bad now,” exclaimed the man, “I hope it passes quickly.”

It did not pass quickly. For an hour the hail rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield, on the whole valley.

The field was white as if covered with salt. Not a leaf remained on the trees. The corn was totally destroyed. The flowers were gone from the plants. Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. When the storm had passed, he stood in the middle of the field and said to his sons:

“A plague of locusts would have left more than this The hail has left nothing; this year we will have no corn....”

That night was a sorrowful one.

“All our work, for nothing.”

“There's no one who can help us.”

“We'll all go hungry this year....”

But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope: help from God.

“Don't be so upset, even though this seems like a total loss. Remember, no one dies of hunger.”

“That's what they say : no one dies of hunger.....”

All through the night, Lencho thought only of his one hope: the help of God whose eyes as he had been instructed see everything even what is deep in one's conscience.

Lencho was an ox of a man, working like an animal in the fields, but still he knew how to write. The following Sunday, at daybreak, he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail.

It was nothing less than a letter to God.

“God,” he wrote, “if you don't help me, my family and I will go hungry this year. I need a hundred pesos in order to sow my field again and to live until the crop comes, because the hailstorm....”

He wrote “To God” on the envelope, put the letter inside and still troubled, went to town. At the post office, he placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox.

One of the employees who was a postman and also helped at the post office, went to his boss laughing heartily and showed him the letter to God. Never in his career as a postman had he known that address. The postmaster – a fat amiable fellow – also broke out laughing, but almost immediately he turned serious and tapping the letter on his desk, commented :

“What faith ! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God !”

So, in order not to shake the writer's faith in God, the postmaster came up with an idea : answer the letter. But when he opened it, it was evident that to answer it he needed something

more than goodwill, ink and paper. But he stuck to his resolution: he asked for money from his employees, he himself gave part of his salary, and several friends of his were obliged to give something for an act of charity.

It was impossible for him to gather together the hundred pesos, so he was able to send the farmer only a little more than half. He put the money in an envelope addressed to Lencho and with them a letter containing only a single word as a signature : God.

The following Sunday Lencho came a bit earlier than usual to ask if there was a letter for him. It was the postman himself who handed the letter to him while the postmaster, experiencing the contentment of a man who has performed a good deed, looked on from the doorway of his office.

Lencho showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence – but he became angry when he counted the money.... God could not have made a mistake, nor could he have denied Lencho what he had requested.

Immediately, Lencho went up to the window to ask for paper and ink. On the public writing table, he started to write, with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas. When he finished, he went to the window to buy a stamp which he licked and then affixed to the envelope with a blow of his fist.

The moment that the letter fell into the mailbox the postmaster went to open it. It said :

“God: Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don’t send it to me through mail, because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks.”—Lencho.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>crest</i>	:	top
<i>downpour</i>	:	heavy rainfall
<i>predicted</i>	:	told before hand
<i>draped</i>	:	(here) covered
<i>locusts</i>	:	large number of insects that eat up leaves, thus causing damage to trees and crop
<i>solitary</i>	:	alone
<i>conscience</i>	:	knowledge of our own acts and feelings
<i>pesos</i>	:	currency used in Latin American countries
<i>amiable</i>	:	friendly, pleasant

<i>tapping</i>	:	hitting gently
<i>resolution</i>	:	firm decision
<i>obliged</i>	:	compelled
<i>wrinklin</i>	:	shrinking (one's brow)
<i>affixed</i>	:	stuck
<i>bunch of crooks</i>	:	a group of cheats

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Where was Lencho's house located ? Did he have any neighbours ?
2. When did it start raining ?
3. What was Lencho's family doing when it started raining ?
4. Why did Lencho go out ? What did he observe ?
5. Why did Lencho's sons run out ? Were they happy ? How do you know ?
6. Why did Lencho become unhappy after the storm ? What did he say ?
7. What did Lencho think throughout the night ?
8. Who did Lencho write to for help ? What did he write in his letter ?
9. How did he address the envelope ? What did he do after that ?
10. Who took the letter to the postmaster ?
11. What did the postmaster do then ? Why did he do so ?
12. When did Lencho receive the letter from 'God' ? Who gave it to him and where ?
13. Was Lencho surprised to receive the money ? Why ?
14. Why was Lencho angry after counting the money ?
15. Did Lencho write back to God ? Why did he do so ?
16. What did Lencho write ?

C. SUGGESTED READING

Half a Rupee Worth by R.K. Narayan

* * * * *

5



THE LAST LEAF

O' Henry

Johnsy was very ill. She felt she would not recover from illness. Who saved her life and how ?

Sue and Johnsy, two young artists, shared a small flat. The flat was on the third storey of an old house.

Johnsy fell very seriously ill in November. She had pneumonia. She would lie in her bed without moving, just gazing out of the window. Sue, her friend, became very worried. She sent for the doctor. Although he came every day, there was no change in Johnsy's condition.

One day, the doctor took Sue aside and asked her, "Is anything worrying Johnsy ?" "No," replied Sue. "But why do you ask ?"

The doctor said, "Johnsy, it seems, has made up her mind that she is not going to get well. If she doesn't want to live, medicines will not help her."

Sue tried her best to make Johnsy take interest in things around her. She talked about clothes and fashions, but Johnsy did not respond. Johnsy continued to lie still on her bed. Sue brought her drawing board into Johnsy's room and started painting. To take Johnsy's mind off her illness, she whistled while working.

Suddenly, Sue heard Johnsy whisper something. She quickly rushed to the bed and heard Johnsy counting backwards. She was looking out of the window and was saying, "Twelve !" After some time, she whispered "eleven", then "ten", then "nine", "eight", "seven". Sue anxiously looked out of the window. She saw an old ivy creeper climbing halfway up the brick wall opposite their window. In the strong wind outside, the creeper was shedding its leaves.

"What is it, dear ?", Sue asked.

“Six,” whispered Johnsy. “They are falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred leaves. There are only five left now.”

“It is autumn,” said Sue, “and the leaves will fall.”

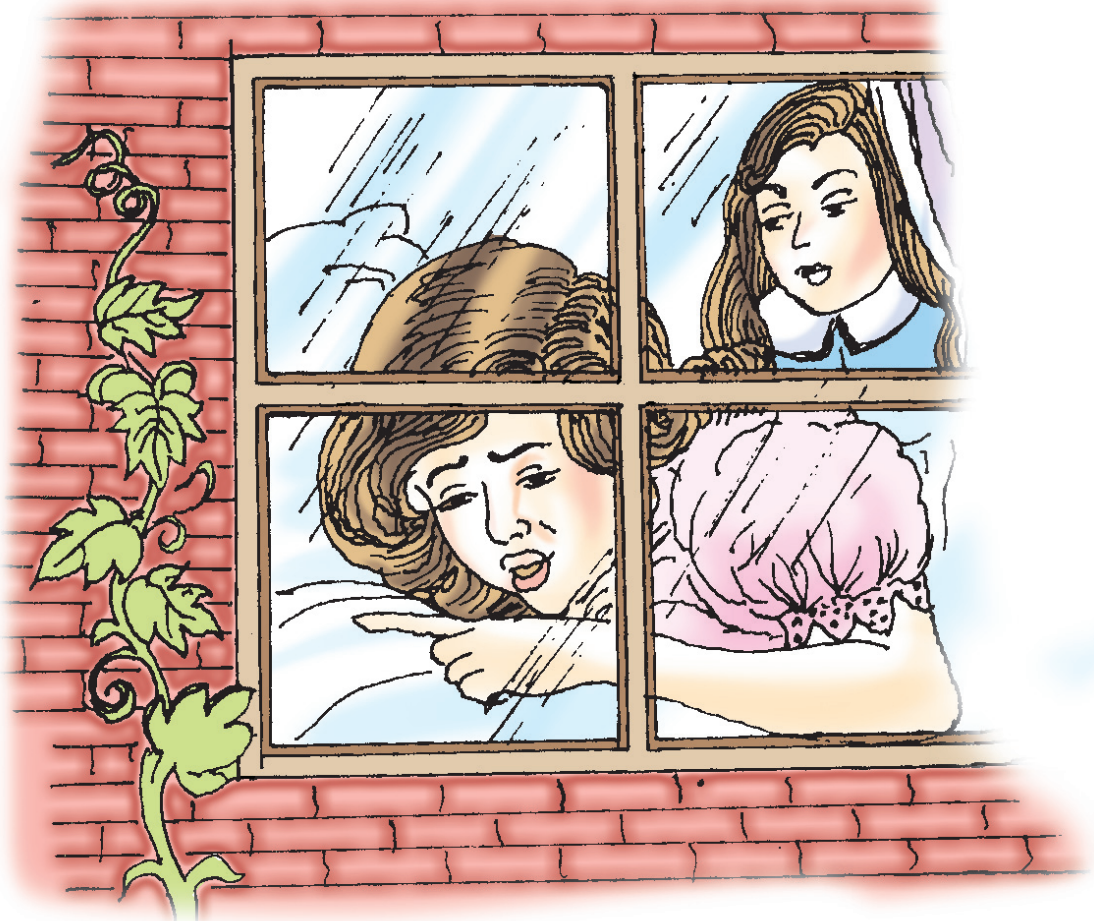
“When the last leaf falls, I will die,” said Johnsy with finality. “I have known this for the last three days.”

“Oh, that’s nonsense,” replied Sue. “What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well ? The doctor is confident that you will get better.”

Johnsy did not say anything. Sue went and brought her a bowl of soup.

“I don’t want any soup,” said Johnsy. “I am not hungry... Now there are only four leaves left. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I will sleep forever.”

Sue sat on Johnsy’s bed, kissed her and said, “You are not going to die. I can’t draw the curtain for I need the light. I want to finish the painting and get some money for us. Please, my dear friend,” she begged Johnsy, “promise not to look out of the window while I paint.”



“All right,” said Johnsy, “finish your painting soon for I want to see the last leaf fall. I’m tired of waiting. I have to die so let me go away peacefully like one of those poor, tired leaves.”

“Try to sleep,” said Sue. “I have to paint an old miner. I will call Behrman up to be my model.”

Sue rushed down. Behrman lived on the ground floor.

He was a sixty-year-old painter. His lifelong dream was to paint a masterpiece but that had remained a dream. Sue poured out her worries to Behrman. She told him how Johnsy was convinced that she would die when the last leaf fell.

“Is she stupid ?” asked Behrman. “How can she be so foolish ?”

“She is running a high temperature,” complained Sue. “She refuses to eat or drink and that worries me a lot.”

“I will come with you and see Johnsy”. Behrman said.

They tiptoed into the room. Johnsy was sleeping. Sue drew the curtains together and they went to the next room. She peeped out through the window. There was only one leaf on the creeper. It was raining heavily and an ice-cold wind was blowing. It seemed as though the leaf would fall any minute now. Behrman did not say a word. He went back to his room.

Johnsy woke up the next morning. In a feeble voice, she asked Sue to draw the curtains. Sue was nervous. She drew back the curtains very reluctantly.

“Oh !” Sue exclaimed as she looked at the creeper.

“Look, there is still one leaf on the creeper. It looks quite green and healthy. In spite of the storm and the fierce winds, it didn’t fall.”

“I heard the wind last night,” said Johnsy. “I thought it would have fallen. It will surely fall today. Then I’ll die.”

“You won’t die,” said Sue. “You have to live for your friends. What would happen to me if you die ?”

Johnsy smiled weakly and closed her eyes. After every hour or so she would look out of the window and find the leaf still there.

In the evening, there was another storm but the leaf did not fall. Johnsy lay for a long time looking at the leaf. Then she called out to Sue.



“I have been a bad girl. You have looked after me so lovingly and I have not cooperated with you. I have been depressed and gloomy. The last leaf has shown me how wicked I have been. I have realised that it is a sin to want to die.”

Sue hugged Johnsy. Then she gave her lots of hot soup and a mirror. Johnsy combed her hair and smiled brightly.

In the afternoon the doctor came. After examining his patient he told Sue, “Johnsy now has the will to live. I am confident she’ll recover soon. Now I must go downstairs and see Behrman. He is also suffering from pneumonia. But I am afraid, there is no hope for him.”

The next morning Sue came and sat on Johnsy’s bed. Taking Johnsy’s hand in hers she said, “I have something to tell you. Mr Behrman died of pneumonia this morning. He was ill for only two days. The first day the janitor found him on his bed, his clothes and shoes were wet and he was shivering. He had been out in that stormy night.”

Then they found a ladder and a lantern still lighted lying near his bed. There were also some brushes and green and yellow paints on the floor near the ladder. “Johnsy dear,” said Sue, “look out of the window. Look at that ivy leaf. Haven’t you wondered why it doesn’t flutter when the wind blows ? That’s Behrman’s masterpiece. He painted it the night the last leaf fell.”

A. GLOSSARY

<i>ivy</i>	:	a climbing plant (creeper) with dark green shiny leaves.
<i>made up mind</i>	:	decided
<i>respond</i>	:	to say something do some action as an answer
<i>whisper</i>	:	speak softly in a low voice
<i>anxious</i>	:	feeling worried
<i>shedding</i>	:	dropping
<i>convinced</i>	:	completely sure about something
<i>masterpiece</i>	:	an excellent piece of art
<i>tiptoed</i>	:	walked on the front of feet so as not to make any noise
<i>peeped out</i>	:	looked out
<i>feeble</i>	:	weak
<i>nervous</i>	:	afraid, worried
<i>reluctant</i>	:	unwilling to do something
<i>cooperate</i>	:	do something as someone wants a person to do
<i>depressed</i>	:	very sad, without hope
<i>gloomy</i>	:	very sad
<i>wicked</i>	:	morally bad in principle
<i>hugged</i>	:	put one's arm around someone to show love
<i>janitor</i>	:	caretaker, one who is paid to look after buildings
<i>flutter</i>	:	move quickly and lightly
<i>fierce</i>	:	marked by extreme and violent energy

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Who were Sue and Johnsy ? What happened to Johnsy ?
2. What did Johnsy feel about her illness ?
3. What did Sue do to make her feel happy ?
4. Why did Johnsy look at the ivy leaves carefully ?
5. Who was Behrman ?

6. Why did Sue call Behrman to her room ?
7. How was Johnsy saved ?
8. What happened to Behrman and why ?
9. What was Behrman's masterpiece ?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Doctor cures but God saves. Discuss.
2. Do you think Behrman was right in sacrificing his life? Why?

D. SUGGESTED READING

The Gift of Magi by O'Henry

* * * * *

6



THE BEWITCHED JACKET

Dino Buzzati

The author got a suit made from an unknown tailor. He found that the jacket of that suit had magical powers. It gave him lots of wealth. Was the author happy with this unexpected wealth ? Let's find out.

One night during a reception at a house in Milan, I met a man about forty years old who looked handsome because of his clothes.

I don't know who he was; I was meeting him for the first time, and at the introduction, as it always happens, it was impossible to get his name. But after some time, I found myself near him, and we started talking. He seemed to be a gentle person, but with an air of sadness. I complimented him for his clothes and I asked him who his tailor was. He smiled curiously, as if he knew I would ask this question. 'Nearly no one knows him,' he said. "Still, he's a great master."

"Can I ?"

"Oh, try, try. His name is Corticella, Alfonso Corticella, via Ferrara 17."

"He will be expensive, I imagine."

"I believe so, but I swear I don't know. He made me this suit three years ago and still he hasn't sent me the bill," he replied.

'Corticella, via Ferrara 17, did you say?' I asked.

"Exactly," the stranger answered. And he left me to join another group of people.

At via Ferrara 17, I found the house. The tailor himself came to let me in. He was a little old man with his hair dyed black. I explained to him how I got his address, praised his cutting, and asked him to make me a suit. He selected a grey wool, then he took my measurements, and offered to come to my house for the fitting. I asked him the price. There was no hurry, he answered. "What a nice man !" I thought at first. But while I was returning home, I realized that the old man had left me feeling uneasy. (Perhaps because of his too

much warm smiles.) In short, I had no wish to see him again. But now the suit had been ordered. And after three weeks it was ready.

When they brought it to me, I tried it (the Jacket, trouser and vest) in front of a mirror. It was a masterpiece. Yet, I don't know why, I didn't feel like wearing it. And weeks passed by, before I decided to wear it.

That day I shall never forget. It was a Tuesday in April and it was raining. When I wore the suit, I was pleased because it fitted me well.

As a rule, I don't put anything in the right jacket pocket; in the left one I keep my card. After a few hours, at the office I just put my hand into the right pocket. I noticed there was a piece of paper inside. Was it the tailor's bill ?

No. It was a ten-thousand-lire note. I was astonished. I certainly had not put it there. I looked at the note carefully. Was it a counterfeit note ? I looked at it in the light. I compared it with the other ones. There was no difference. I thought it must be Corticella's. Perhaps a



customer had come to make a payment. The tailor did not have his wallet with him just then so he slipped the money into my jacket which might be hanging nearby. These things happen.

I rang up my secretary. I wanted to write a letter to Corticella, to return the money that was not mine. Yet (and I can't say why I did it), I slipped my hand into the pocket again.

Is there anything wrong, sir ? Do you feel ill ?” asked my secretary. I might have turned pale as death. In my pocket, my fingers touched another piece of paper – which had not been there a few minutes before.

“No, no, it's nothing,” I said with a little dizziness. ‘It happens to me sometimes. Maybe I'm a little tired. You can go now, dear. I wanted to dictate a letter, but we'll do it later. Only after my secretary left, I took out the piece of paper from my pocket. It was another ten-thousand-lire note. Then I tried the third time. And a third bank note came out.

My heart began to race. It was something mysterious. Just like a fairy tale-difficult to believe. I left the office and went home. I wanted to be alone. Luckily, my maid had already gone. I shut the doors and lowered the blinds. I began to take out the notes one after another, very quickly. My pocket was never empty. I did it again and again, with a fear that the miracle may end any time. I wanted to continue day and night, until I had billions. But at a certain point the flow diminished.

There was a heap of notes before me. The important thing was to hide them, so that no one might get wind of it . I emptied an old trunk full of rugs and put the money, arranged in many piles, at the bottom. Then I slowly began counting. There were 58 million lire.

I woke up the next morning after the maid arrived. She was amazed to see me in bed wearing a suit. I tried to laugh, explaining that I had drunk a little too much the night before. The maid asked me to take off the suit, so that at least she could give it a brushing.

I answered that I had to go out immediately and didn't have time to change. Then hurriedly I went to a store selling ready-to-wear clothes to buy another suit of the same kind; I would leave this one in the maid's care; “mine” I would hide in a safe place.

I didn't know whether I was living in a dream. On the street, I was continually feeling my pocket through my raincoat. Each time I breathed a sigh of relief. I could feel the paper money.

But an incident dampened my joy. There was news of a bank robbery in the morning papers.

A bank's armoured car was carrying money to the main office when it was stopped and cleaned out in Viale Palmanova by four criminals. As people gathered around the scene, one of the criminals began to shoot and a man was killed. But, above all, the amount of the loot struck : it was 58 million lire !

Was there a connection between my sudden wealth and the theft that had happened almost at the same time ? Is it foolish to think so ? What's more, I am not superstitious, but the incident left me a little confused.

The more you get, the more you want. I was already rich. But I wanted to get richer. And the same evening I set to work again. This time it was 135 million.

That night I could not close my eyes. I was confused. At dawn I leaped from the bed, dressed, and ran outside to get the newspaper.

As I read, I lost my breath. A terrible fire, which had begun in a warehouse, had half destroyed a building on the main street, via San Clora. The fire had destroyed the safes of a large real estate company which had more than 135 million in cash. Two firemen were also killed while putting out the fire.

Now I knew where the money in my pocket came from-crimes, blood and death. But I was not willing to blame myself for that. I continued taking out money from my pocket. It was easy. I slipped my hand into the pocket and my fingers always touched bank notes. The money, the divine money !

I soon bought a huge villa (though I chose to live in the old house), bought paintings, drove around in big automobiles, and after leaving my firm for "reasons of health", travelled through the world with wonderful women.

I knew whenever I drew money from my pocket, something painful happened in the world. But still I continued. And the tailor ? I telephoned him to ask for the bill, but no one answered. In via Ferrara, when I went in search of him, they told me that he had gone abroad, they didn't know where.

One morning, in the building where I lived for many years, they found that a sixty-year-old retired woman had killed herself because she had mislaid her monthly pension of 30 thousand lire, which she had collected a day before. That money was with me now. 'Enough, enough !' I thought. I had to get rid of the jacket. I decided to destroy it.



By car, I arrived at a valley in the Alps. I left the car at a grassy clearing and started towards the forest. Not a living soul was there. I went beyond the forest and reached the rocky ground. Here, between two huge boulders, I pulled the bewitched jacket from my knapsack, and set it on fire. In a few minutes, only ashes were left. But as the flames were dying out, I heard a human voice. It was only two or three metres away. “Too late, too late !” it said. Terrified, I turned around. But I saw no one. I jumped from one rock to another to look for the person. Nothing. There were only rocks.

Overcoming the fear, I went to the valley. I was happy that the jacket was not with me any more. I was free at last. And rich, luckily.

But my car was not at the grassy clearing. And after I returned to the city, I saw my villa had disappeared; in its place there was a field with a notice “Municipal Land For Sale”. There was no money left in my saving accounts. And there was dust, nothing but dust, in my old trunk.

I know that it’s still not over. I started working again in the same place with great difficulty. I am sad and worried, but no one takes notice of my state. I know some day my door bell will ring. I’ll answer it and find the cursed tailor before me asking for the final settling of my account.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>bewitched</i>	:	having magical powers
<i>jacket</i>	:	coat
<i>complimented</i>	:	praised, said nice words
<i>curious</i>	:	eager to know something
<i>reception</i>	:	a party to welcome someone, celebrate something
<i>astonished</i>	:	very surprised
<i>lire</i>	:	Italian unit of money (like rupee)
<i>counterfeit</i>	:	not real
<i>realized</i>	:	became aware, understood
<i>dizziness</i>	:	giddiness
<i>miracle</i>	:	something that one does not expect happens
<i>diminished</i>	:	became less
<i>rug</i>	:	thick material like a carpet
<i>piles</i>	:	a number of things lying one on the top of another
<i>blinds</i>	:	window shades, covering
<i>dampen</i>	:	make feeling less strong, dull
<i>armoured</i>	:	bullet-proof
<i>cleared out</i>	:	stole everything
<i>superstition</i>	:	faith in magic
<i>divine</i>	:	holy
<i>automobiles</i>	:	motors, cars etc.
<i>mislaid</i>	:	put something somewhere and not found it for some time
<i>clearing</i>	:	open place in the forest where there are no trees
<i>boulders</i>	:	huge rocks
<i>terrified</i>	:	frightened
<i>cursed</i>	:	hateful

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Who did the author meet at a party ?
2. Why was the author impressed by him?
3. Where did the author get his suit made ?
4. Why was the author not keen to wear the suit ?

5. What did the author find in the right pocket of the jacket ? What happened after that ?
6. Why did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' not return the suit to the tailor ?
7. What did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' do after coming home ?
8. Why did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' buy another suit ?
9. What did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' do with the money ?
10. Did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' know that there was a connection between the ill-gotten money and the bad happenings ?
11. Why did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' still want more money ?
12. Why did the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' decide to destroy the jacket ? What happened when he was destroying it ?
13. Do you think the author of 'The Bewitched Jacket' was a happy man after getting rid of the jacket ? Why ?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Ill-gotten money does not make a person happy. Discuss.
2. Mystery stories are not sensible. They should not be taught. Do you agree ? Why ?

D. SUGGESTED READING

Mystery Stories by Helen Cresswell

* * * * *



THE KING WHO LIMPED

MONICA THORNE

There is a new king. He does not like sycophants so he wants to test his courtiers. How does he do that ? Read on.



CHARACTERS

THE KING

THE PRIME MINISTER

CHANCELLOR

A COURTIER

TWO LADIES-IN-WAITING

TWO NEIGHBOURS

TWO HERALDS

A PAGE

A DOG

SCENE : In the Audience Room of the palace, the courtiers are waiting for the king. The Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Ladies-in-waiting are anxious to meet the new king.

PRIME MINISTER: [*who is plump and important-looking*]. Well, I think it is simply stupid having a king none of us has ever seen. Why, he might be a Chinaman or an African for all we know.

FIRST LADY: [*who is tall and slim, looking up from the book on her knee*]. Don't be silly.

SECOND LADY: [*who is short and fat-very fat-looking up from the hand mirror she has taken out of her bag*]. You shouldn't call the Prime Minister silly. It's not respectful !

FIRST LADY: Why not, if he is silly ?

CHANCELLOR: It doesn't matter how silly he is if he's the Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: [*rising and sitting on the throne, pushing the CHANCELLOR off the arm*]. Please, I beg you to stop quarrelling.

CHANCELLOR: You'll get into trouble if you are found sitting on the throne. You'd better get up.

THE COURTIER: [*who is a handsome young man, with a kind heart*]. I expect the Prime Minister found the steps hard, didn't you, your Excellency ?

PRIME MINISTER: Very hard, and His Majesty is keeping us waiting a long time. I am anxious – very anxious.

FIRST LADY: What about ?

PRIME MINISTER: About this new king whom none of us knows. Why, he may be a tyrant – a perfect tyrant !

SECOND LADY: [*putting her hair straight*]. What's a tyrant ?

FIRST LADY: One who makes you eat rice pudding when he knows you hate it.

SECOND LADY: I like rice pudding.

FIRST LADY: You like anything to eat !

CHANCELLOR: Will you stop being rude to one another ?

The King may be here at any moment. What are you staring at out of that window ?

COURTIER: [*kneeling on the window-seat*]. There are crowds of people in the street and it is pouring with rain. They don't seem to mind a bit. Now they are all waving their hands.

[*The sound of a trumpet is heard.*]

Ah ! Here he comes. [*Craning nearer to the window.*]

Well, that's queer !

SECOND LADY: What's queer ?

COURTIER: Never mind, you'll soon see.

SECOND LADY: But I want to know now.

[The trumpet is heard again, and this time it sounds nearer.]

FIRST LADY: You'd better get up off that throne, Jim Crow.

PRIME MINISTER: Stop calling me Jim Crow. My name is James Crowther-SIR James Crowther.

CHANCELLOR:*[as a third trumpet sounds]*. Here comes His Majesty ! *[Both he and the PRIME MINISTER puff themselves out importantly and stand on either side of the throne.]*

SECOND LADY: I do hope he is handsome. *[She rises and smooths her dress.]*

CHANCELLOR: Of course he is handsome.

PRIME MINISTER: I hope he won't want his own way too much.

CHANCELLOR: Of course he won't want his own way too much.

COURTIER:*[rising]*. Why shouldn't he want his——

PRIME MINISTER: Be quiet ! Here he is !

[Two HERALDS enter, blowing their trumpets. They are followed by the KING who wears a bowler hat and walks with a pronounced limp. Behind him comes a PAGE carrying a dog on a cushion. Behind the PAGE walk two NEIGHBOURS each of them holding a lead attached to the dog's collar. As the KING goes up to the throne, the gentlemen bow and the ladies show courtesy, but there is a buzz of astonishment at the KING's unusual appearance.]

SECOND LADY:*[in a whisper]*. What a funny hat !

PRIME MINISTER:*[in a whisper]*. Why, he limps !

KING:*[seating himself on the throne]*. Well, here we are at last.

[The HERALDS seat themselves on the steps of the throne with their legs crossed.]

PRIME MINISTER:*[looking at the NEIGHBOURS who have stayed near the door with the dog and the PAGE]*. Your Majesty, if I may be so bold as to ask – who are these persons ?

KING: Oh, I caught them in the street, fighting, so I brought them in here to find out what it was all about. They were holding up the traffic. *[To NEIGHBOURS.]* You'd better sit down and wait.

[The NEIGHBOURS sit on the floor with their legs crossed, and the PAGE sits between them holding the dog. Now and again they both try to pet the dog.]

CHANCELLOR: It is very unusual to bring common people into the palace, Your Majesty !

KING: What did you expect me to do ? Let them go on fighting ?

PRIME MINISTER: No, Your Majesty – but—

KING: But – but – but! But me no more butts ! I’m going to “arbitrate” between them.

SECOND LADY: What does “arbitrate” mean ? [*She says this in a loud whisper.*]

FIRST LADY: [*who has more sense; in her ordinary voice*]. Decide which is in the right and which is not.

SECOND LADY: Oh ! I see. What a funny hat !

[Everyone stares at the KING’s bowler hat.]

KING: [*taking off his hat and looking at it, then putting it back on his head again*]. My hat. What’s wrong with my hat ? It’s a very good hat.

CHANCELLOR: No doubt, Your Majesty. But our previous King wore a crown.

KING: What ! In this blazing sun ? It’s a wonder he didn’t die of sunstroke.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, no, Your Majesty, he died of old age.

KING: Well, that’s the disease no one can avoid.

CHANCELLOR: [*to the HERALD nearest him, handing him his coronet*]. Take this away and bring me a hat.

KING: Well, I suppose we had better get on with business.

What do we do first ?

[The two HERALDS return and hand hats to the CHANCELLOR and the PRIME MINISTER, who put them on. The HERALDS seat themselves as before.]

PRIME MINISTER: [*as he puts on his hat*]. We kiss your hand, Your Majesty.

KING: It’s a queer idea; but I suppose it is usual.

CHANCELLOR: [*putting on his hat*]. Quiet, Your Majesty.

PRIME MINISTER: Quiet.

SECOND LADY: Quiet.

KING: Come along then, and let’s get it over.

[The PRIME MINISTER goes up to the throne and walking with a limp like the KING, goes down on one knee and kisses the KING’s hand.]

What’s the matter with you ? Are you lame ?

PRIME MINISTER: I have cramp in my leg, Your Majesty.

[The CHANCELLOR follows, exactly imitating the PRIME MINISTER.]

KING: Have you got cramp, too ?

CHANCELLOR: [*limping backwards from the throne*]. I have rheumatism, I think, Your Majesty.

[The SECOND LADY follows, also limping.]

KING: What ! Another one with rheumatism ?

SECOND LADY: No, a sprained ankle, Your Majesty.

KING: Dear me, how unfortunate ! Cramp, rheumatism, and a sprained ankle. Are you sure I've come to the right place ? This is the palace, isn't it, and not a convalescent home ?

[The FIRST LADY and the COURTIER follow, but they do not limp. While this is going on, the SECOND LADY rubs her ankle and the CHANCELLOR and PRIME MINISTER rub their legs.]

KING:*[to the FIRST LADY as she kneels].* Have you nothing the matter with you ?

FIRST LADY: No, I'm afraid not, Your Majesty. *[As she returns to her place.]* I've always been very healthy.

KING:*[to the COURTIER as he kneels].* Or with you ?

COURTIER. I trust so, Your Majesty.

KING: Dear me, you seem to be a young man with a mind of your own.

COURTIER: I trust so, Your Majesty.

KING: Now *[pointing to the two NEIGHBOURS]*, what would you do with these two quarrelsome people ?

[The NEIGHBOURS are pulling at the dog, and just at this moment the PAGE gives them each a sharp dig in the ribs with his elbows.]

PRIME MINISTER: If I may suggest, Your Majesty, I should put them both in prison.

KING: What for ?

CHANCELLOR: If I may suggest, Your Majesty, for causing a breach of peace.

SECOND LADY: What is a breach of peace?

FIRST LADY: Be quiet. You are one !

KING:*[to the COURTIER].* What would you do ?

COURTIER: I should listen to what they have to say.

KING: A good idea. *[To the NEIGHBOURS.]* Come forward, and let us hear what you have to say for yourselves.

[They drop the dog's leads and come forward and kneel at the foot of the throne.]

PRIME MINISTER and CHANCELLOR *[together]*. If I may suggest.....

KING: Sit down, for goodness' sake, and be quiet for a minute, and stop suggesting. *[To the NEIGHBOURS as the PRIME MINISTER and CHANCELLOR sit on the top step of the throne looking crushed.]* Now, my men, what were you fighting about ?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: The dog belongs to me, Your Majesty, and he says it is his. [*Pointing his finger at the other man.*]

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: He lies, Your Majesty. The dog is mine. It was given to me by my brother last August.

KING: Go and fetch your brother.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: I am afraid that is impossible, Your Majesty. My brother is dead.

KING: Well, a dead witness is of no use to you, that's certain.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: Do not believe him, Your Majesty. I found the dog starving in the street, and took it home three months ago. It has been with me ever since.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: It is not true, Your Majesty. He would never be kind to a starving animal. He is a hard man.

KING: Well, one of you must be lying. Which is it ?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: Not I, Your Majesty, I have never told an untruth in my life.

KING: Humph ! You must be a most remarkable man.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: I am a man of few words, Your Majesty, but I still say the dog is mine.

KING: Is there anyone here who knows these two men ?

[All shake their heads and murmur "No".]

Then we can get no evidence. What is to be done now ?

COURTIER: Keep the dog yourself, Your Majesty. Then no one can quarrel about it.

KING: But I don't care for dogs. I like cats better. Besides, I want to find out which is the real owner. Also the dog is certainly not mine. I have no right to it. [*To FIRST LADY.*]
What would you do about it ? You, I mean – the lady who did not limp.

FIRST LADY: Oh, I hardly know ! Why not divide the dog in two and give them half each ?

KING: A splendid idea. [*To NEIGHBOURS.*] Do you men agree to that ?

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: If Your Majesty thinks fit.

KING: [*to SECOND NEIGHBOUR.*] And you, my man ?

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: No, no ! I do not agree to that !

Let him keep the dog, Your Majesty ! It is a good little dog. I cannot bear to see it harmed !
Let him have the dog.

KING: Humph ! It seems quite clear which is the owner.

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: I am, Your Majesty. May I have my dog and go home now, please, Your Majesty ?

KING: [to FIRST NEIGHBOUR]. You said you had never told an untruth in your life. It seems to me you have never done much else. [To HERALDS.] Take him off to prison !

[The HERALDS seize him.]

FIRST NEIGHBOUR: But why, Your Majesty ? I have done nothing wrong ! Is it justice, Your Majesty, to put an innocent man in prison ? [He is struggling to free himself from the two HERALDS.]

KING: [severely]. Be still, you rascal. You will go to prison for two reasons. First, because you caused a breach of the peace by fighting in the street, and second, because you tried to steal this dog which does not belong to you. Away with him !

[The HERALDS lead him off.]

PRIME MINISTER: But Your Majesty, if I may suggest.....

KING: Go on, suggest !

PRIME MINISTER: You are still not certain that this man is not the rightful owner of the dog, and.....

KING [interrupting impatiently]. Oh, yes, I am. This other man is the rightful owner of the dog. He is fond of his dog and could not bear to see it harmed. [To the SECOND NEIGHBOUR.] Take your dog home now, and on your way out, call in at the palace kitchen and tell the cook to give you a bone for him – but not a chicken bone. Chicken bones are bad for the little fellow.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR: Thank you, Your Majesty. [He turns to go out, but is stopped by the PRIME MINISTER, who takes him by the shoulders and walks him to the door backwards.]

CHANCELLOR: The late king would have punished both for being a nuisance and had the dog destroyed.

KING: I am not the late king. I am the new king [meaningly], as you will soon discover. Have you still got rheumatism ?

CHANCELLOR: Yes, Your Majesty.

[The KING rises, takes off his bowler hat and puts it on the throne, then walks quite naturally up to the CHANCELLOR.]

KING: Have you still got rheumatism ?

CHANCELLOR: No-o-o, Your Majesty. The - er- pain is going off.

KING: Ah ! So the pain is going off. I thought so. Why are you wearing a bowler hat ? It looks ridiculous !

CHANCELLOR: Because it is a sunny day, as you yourself said, Your Majesty. [*He bows deeply, and his bowler hat, which is too much small for him, falls off, and is picked up by the COURTIER, who hangs it on the back of the throne.*]

KING: Rubbish ! You limped because I limped and you wore a bowler hat because I wore one. It is pouring with rain but you say it is a sunny day because I said it was a sunny day. You, my dear Chancellor, are what is politely known as a sycophant.

SECOND LADY: What is a sycophant ?

KING: You are— and the Chancellor is — and the Prime Minister. You, all tried to flatter me, by imitating all the foolish things I did.

PRIME MINISTER: It is usual to agree with the king, Your Majesty.

KING: [*striding up to him*]. Usual ! Rubbish ! Because if a thing is usual, does it mean that it is sensible or right ? If I do stupid things, is that any reason why you should do them ? [*The KING snatches the bowler hat off the PRIME MINISTER'S head and hands it to the COURTIER who hangs it on the other side of the throne.*] I put on a limp, and wore a funny hat to find out if there were any honest people in this court. I've found two.

SECOND LADY: We are honoured, Your Majesty.

KING: Oh, I didn't mean you ! You [*to the COURTIER*] are honest. You can become my Prime Minister. Perhaps together we shall be able to settle a few little wars. And you [*to the FIRST LADY*] are honest, too. You are made chief Lady-in-waiting. Perhaps then there will be less gossip in the palace.

SECOND LADY: But I am chief Lady-in-waiting, Your Majesty.

KING: So much standing on your feet must tire you when you have a sprained ankle. You had better go home and rest it well. [*To HERALDS, who have returned, and stand one on either side of the door waiting for orders.*] Take those bowler hats and put them in the town museum. The audience is over. [*The KING walks out, followed by the PAGE and the HERALDS carrying the bowler hats. The others remain staring at one another in amazement as the curtain falls.*]

A. GLOSSARY

<i>Herald</i>	:	a person who announces important news
<i>Page</i>	:	a young male attendant
<i>sycophant</i>	:	a person who tries to win favour by flattery
<i>limped</i>	:	couldn't walk properly because of injury in the leg
<i>Chancellor</i>	:	a title of a senior state officer
<i>plump</i>	:	a little fat

<i>Excellency</i>	:	a title used while talking to / talking about some important official
<i>anxious</i>	:	feeling worried, nervous
<i>tyrant</i>	:	a cruel ruler
<i>rude</i>	:	not showing respect
<i>craning</i>	:	stretching one's neck to see something /someone
<i>queer</i>	:	strange, unusual
<i>trumpet</i>	:	a long brass musical instrument
<i>puff</i>	:	show oneself too full of pride
<i>smoothes</i>	:	removes creases from the dress
<i>pronounced</i>	:	very noticeable, clear
<i>courtesy</i>	:	show respect by doing an action
<i>buzz</i>	:	low, soft sounds produced while talking
<i>holding up</i>	:	blocking the movement
<i>expect</i>	:	hope for
<i>whisper</i>	:	talk in a very low tone into someone's ear
<i>previous</i>	:	earlier, former
<i>avoid</i>	:	stop from happening, prevent
<i>coronet</i>	:	a small brass musical instrument like a trumpet
<i>get on with</i>	:	begin
<i>cramp</i>	:	sudden tightening of a muscle which causes pain
<i>imitating</i>	:	copying
<i>sprain</i>	:	injury which makes the part of the body swell; it is painful
<i>convalescent home</i>	:	a kind of hospital where people go to get well after serious illness
<i>quarrelsome</i>	:	one who argues a lot; picks up fights
<i>sharp dig</i>	:	strong and sudden push
<i>breached</i>	:	broken
<i>remarkable</i>	:	unusual
<i>evidence</i>	:	proof
<i>care for</i>	:	like
<i>splendid</i>	:	excellent, great

<i>innocent</i>	:	not guilty
<i>seize</i>	:	hold
<i>severely</i>	:	harshly, angrily
<i>interrupting</i>	:	saying something to stop another person from speaking
<i>flatter</i>	:	butter up, say nice words that a person does not deserve in order to gain something
<i>gossip</i>	:	talk about other people which is unkind and untrue
<i>audience</i>	:	meeting
<i>over</i>	:	ended

B. COMPREHENSION

1. Why were the courtiers anxious ?
2. How did the king look like ?
3. Who did the king bring with him ? Why ?
4. Why were the two men fighting ?
5. Why did the Chancellor and the Prime Minister walk with a limp ?
6. Who else did not walk properly ? Why ?
7. How did the king return the dog to the right owner ?
8. Why did the king send the first neighbour to prison ?
9. Why was the king not pleased with the Chancellor and the Prime Minister ?
10. How was the first lady rewarded ?
11. Why were the courtiers amazed at the king's behaviour ?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Do you like the king's way of finding out the honest people in his court ? Why ?
2. Sycophancy is a slow poison for a country's progress. Discuss.

D. SUGGESTED READING

Modern One Act Plays for Schools edited by J M Charlton

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