

The Ashes that Made Trees Bloom

Once there lived an old couple. They had a pet dog. They had no child. They loved the dog as if it were a baby. The dog was called Muko. The kind couple fed the dog with their own forks. In return, the dog also loved them much.

The old man was a farmer. Every morning Muko followed him to his fields. A heron walked in the footsteps of the old man to pick up worms. Like his master, the dog also never harmed the bird.

One day, the dog put his paws against the old man's legs. He motioned with his head to some spot behind. To please his pet, the old man followed him. At a little distance from there, the dog stopped. It started scratching the ground. To help his pet, the old man struck his hoe in the earth. Now there was a pile of gold before him.

So the old couple became rich. They gave a feast to their friends and helped their poor neighbours. In the same village, there lived a wicked old man and his wife. They brought the dog into their garden. They set before him good food. But the dog was afraid. He neither ate nor moved.

They dragged the dog out of doors. They walked with him. When they reached a pine tree, the dog began to scratch the ground. The wicked couple was delighted. Both of them dug the ground. What they got was a dead kitten. The couple was very angry. They killed the dog. Then they flung him into the hole they had dug. They heaped the earth over his carcass.

The incident of the dog's death reached the ears of its owner. He felt so sad as if he had lost his own son. He went to the place where his pet had been buried. He mourned for a long time. He called him many dear names as if he were alive. That night he saw his dog in his dreams. The dog asked him to cut the pine tree and make from it a mortar. He also asked him to make from that wood a mill.

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The old man did as he was told. With much labour, he made a small bowl of the wood. Then he made a long handled hammer of wood. When the new year drew near, he decided to make some rice pastry. They put the boiled rice in the wooden mortar. The old man used the wooden hammer to pound the mass into dough. When the pastry was ready for baking, it turned into a mass of gold coins. The old woman took the hand-mill, and filling it with bean sauce began to grind. The gold dropped like rain. At this moment the envious neighbour peeped into the window. He decided to borrow the mill.

The old couple readily gave their mill to the neighbour. The man began to pound the rice and the woman began to grind. However, this time the pastry and sauce turned into worms. They broke the mill into pieces to use it as firewood.