



# The Poisoned Roti

THERE was an old beggar who lived in a poor little hut not far from a certain village. Every day, he would visit the village and go from house to house begging for food. Most of the village people would gladly share their food with him. But there was one woman who, after some time, became angry that this beggar was always knocking at her door and asking for food.

One day, the woman's husband and son had to go away on a long journey. She was left all alone at home. "Today," she said to herself, "today I shall get rid of this beggar once and for all. No longer will he pester me. I know what I shall do."

Saying this, the woman set about kneading some flour to make some roti (a type of flat, unleavened bread). When it was just about the time that the

beggar would come knocking at her door, the woman cooked one roti. Before she cooked the roti, she had mixed some poison into the dough. When the beggar arrived at her door, she was ready and waiting for him.

“Uncle,” she said, “today I have no rice to give you. I don’t have any money either to offer you. All I have is a roti that I have just cooked. Look! It is still hot from the fire.”

“Thank you, daughter,” the old beggar said gratefully, taking the roti from her and putting it away safely in his bag. “I am not hungry right now. I will leave it until I get home.”

The woman closed her door behind the beggar and laughed out loud, happy to be rid of him at last.

The old beggar walked slowly home, silently praising the woman for the kindness she had shown him. Just after he arrived home and settled himself for the night, he heard a knock on his door. He opened the door to let in a father and son who sought some shelter for the night.

“Uncle,” said the father, “we have travelled all day and we are bone tired. We live in the village nearby but my son cannot go a step further. We are both hungry and thirsty. Do you have any food that





you can share with us? We'll gladly pay you for whatever you can offer us."

"Don't worry, my son," said the beggar. "I live because of the kindness and generosity of your people. Now it is my turn to show that very kindness to you also. I have a roti given to me by a woman from your village. Take it, my son, and I ask no payment in return." The beggar broke the roti and shared it between father and son.

After the two men had eaten, they went to sleep. In the morning the beggar got up and went to awaken his guests. He called them, there was no answer.



He called again, still there was no answer. Finally he went to shake them awake. He touched the father. The father did not stir. The beggar shook the son. He moved the boy's head from side to side. The boy did not get up. To his great horror, the poor beggar realized that both father and son were dead.

The beggar anxiously hurried to tell the villagers what had happened. They all came to the beggar's hut to see who the dead people were. What a shock it was for the woman when she saw that they were none other than her husband and son.

After hearing the beggar's story, the woman realized that it was she to blame for the death of her two loved ones. Tormented by guilt, she confessed her evil deed to all those present at the beggar's home. But no-one felt sorry for the wicked widow. She was condemned to live alone for the rest of her life.

