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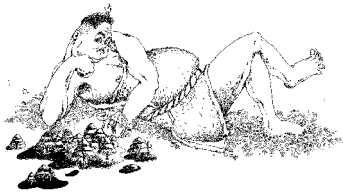
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1

The Selfish Giant

by Oscar Wilde



Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach trees that in the springtime broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. ① The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. How happy we are here! they cried to each other.

One day the giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre ②, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, ③ and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

What are you doing here? he cried in a very gruff ④ voice, and the children ran away.

My own garden is my own garden, said the giant, anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself ⑤. So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board:

**TRESPASSERS
WILL BE
PROSECUTED ⑥**

He was a very selfish giant.

① 草地上到处都是像星星一样美丽的花朵，12棵桃树在春天里绽放出娇嫩的粉色和珠灰色花朵，秋天里结出丰硕的果实。blossom: *n.* 花；开花。（Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars 是一个倒装句，主语是 beautiful flowers like stars。本文中有许多这样的倒装句。）

② the Cornish ogre: 〈英国〉康沃尔郡的妖魔

③ 因为他的话题有限，7年后他已经说完了他想说的一切。

④ gruff: *a.* 低沉沙哑的，粗哑的

⑤ 除了我自己，我不允许别人进来玩。
but: *prep.* 除去，除了

⑥ 擅自入内者将受到惩罚。prosecute: *v.* 起诉，控告

- ① slip back into the ground: 悄悄缩回到地下
- ② 雪用她那巨大的白色斗篷盖住了草地, 霜把所有的树都涂上了银色。
- ③ 他裹着毛皮, 整天在花园四处吼叫着, 把烟囱管帽都吹掉了。
- ④ 我们应该叫冰雹也来玩玩。
- ⑤ 他在城堡的屋顶上敲打着, 直到把差不多所有的石板打碎。
- ⑥ 它听起来是那么的甜美, 他想这一定是国王的乐队正路过此地。
- ⑦ linnet: *n.* 朱顶雀
- ⑧ the open casement: 打开的窗扉

The poor children had nowhere to play now. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high walls when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. How happy we were there! they said to each other.

Then the spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the selfish giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no children and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground^① again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the snow and the frost. Spring has forgotten this garden, they cried, so we will live here all the year round. The snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the frost painted all the trees silver.^② Then they invited the north wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down.^③ This is a delightful spot, he said, we must ask the hail on a visit^④. So the hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates^⑤ and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

I cannot understand why the spring is so late in coming, said the selfish giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold, white garden. I hope there will be a change in the weather.

But the spring never came, nor the summer. The autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the giant's garden she gave none. He is too selfish, she said. So it was always winter there, and the north wind and the hail, and the frost and the snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the king's musicians passing by.^⑥ It was really only a little linnet^⑦ singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the hail stopped dancing over his head, and the north wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement^⑧. I believe the spring has come at last, said the giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

What did he see?

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in^①, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering^② with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene; only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy^③. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still covered with frost and snow and the north wind was blowing and roaring above it. Climb up! Little boy, said the tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the giant's heart melted^④ as he looked out.

How selfish I have been! he said; Now I know why the spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever. He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the front door quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became winter again. Only the little boy did not run for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the giant coming. And the giant stole up behind him^⑤ and took him gently in his hand, and put him up into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the giant's neck^⑥, and kissed him. And the other children when they saw that the giant was not wicked any longer came running back,^⑦ and with them came the spring. It is your garden now, little children, said the giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o'clock they found the giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the giant to bid him goodbye.

But where is your little companion? he said, the boy I put into the

① crept in: 偷偷溜进来 (crept 是 creep 的过去式。)

② twitter: v. (鸟) 吱吱叫

③ 一个小孩站在里面 (这是 a little boy was standing in it 的倒装句)。

④ 巨人的心软了。

⑤ 巨人悄悄地走到他的后面。

⑥ 小男孩伸出胳膊, 搂住了巨人的脖子。

⑦ 把状语从句 when they saw that the giant was not wicked any longer 放到句首, 就不难理解这句话了。

- ① 你们必须告诉他明天一定要来。
- ② feeble: *a.* 虚弱的, 衰弱的
- ③ 他现在不恨冬天了, 因为他知道这只是春天在睡觉, 花儿在休息。
- ④ 它的树枝是金色的, 银色的果实从树枝上垂落下来, 树下站着那个他喜爱的小男孩。
- ⑤ 他匆匆跑过草坪。
- ⑥ 他的脸都气红了。
- ⑦ 是谁敢伤害你? hath=has, thee=you
- ⑧ 因为在小孩的手掌上有两个钉子的印子, 小脚上也有。(这里暗示小孩其实是耶稣基督。)
- ⑨ 我会拿起我的长剑杀死他。slay: *v.* 杀死
- ⑩ nay = no
- ⑪ Who art thou = Who are you
- ⑫ 神奇的敬畏感油然而生。
- ⑬ Paradise: *n.* 天堂

tree. The giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

We don't know, answered the children, he has gone away.

You must tell him to be sure and come tomorrow,^① said the giant. But the children said that they did not know where he lived and had never seen him before; and the giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the giant. But the little boy whom the giant loved was never seen again. The giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his first little friend, and often spoke of him. How I would like to see him! he used to say.

Years went over, and the giant grew very old and feeble^②. He could not play about any more, so he sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games, and admired his garden. I have many beautiful flowers, he said; but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the winter now, for he knew that it was merely the spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.^③

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.^④

Downstairs ran the giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass,^⑤ and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger^⑥, and he said, Who hath dared to wound thee?^⑦ For on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.^⑧

Who hath dared to wound thee? cried the giant, tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him^⑨.

Nay^⑩! answered the child, but these are the wounds of love.

Who art thou^⑪? said the giant, and a strange awe fell on him,^⑫ and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the giant, and said to him, You let me play once in your garden, today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise.^⑬

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

About the author

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Irish poet and dramatist, was born in Dublin to unconventional parents—his mother was a poet and journalist. His father was a gifted writer, and specialist in diseases of the eye and ear. Oscar Wilde's reputation rests on his comic masterpieces *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Among Wilde's other best-known works are his only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and his fairy tales.

Exercises

Questions for comprehension

1. At the beginning of the story, we are told that the giant spent seven years with his friend and decided to come back to his garden because he had said all that he had to say to his friend. What does this tell us about his character?
2. What do you imagine the garden was like before the selfish giant went to visit his friend? Was it as lovely as it was the day when he came back from his visit? Why do you think so?
3. Did the giant love to see the spring flowers and did he understand why spring failed to come to his garden?
4. The text is very powerful in the use of symbols. For instance, the flowers in the garden symbolize the season of spring. What do you think the garden, the giant, the trees symbolize?
5. Who was the poor little child who was too small to reach up to the branches of the tree? Why do you think the author wanted him to be like that? Why did the boy say that the wounds on his palms and feet were the wounds of love?
6. Why did the giant miss the little boy so much? Was it just because he was the child that had kissed him?
7. Which garden did the little boy invite the giant to? What message does this give us about the rewards of being generous and kind?

Questions for discussion

1. Originally published in 1888, "The Selfish Giant" is as popular today as it was well over a hundred years ago. Oscar Wilde's simple, yet eloquent text, gives people a gentle message of love, generosity and sharing. Do you think this message is still important in today's society?
2. Kindness and generosity usually have rewards. But at the end of the story, the giant died. What then is (are) his reward(s)?
3. The giant changed from a selfish person to a loving one. Do you think the change natural and convincing? Why or why not?

2

Who took the traveler's gold?
Only two knew, and one of them could not talk.

The Sheik's White Donkey

① sheik: *n.* 阿拉伯国家中家族或部落的首领或酋长

② caravan: *n.* 穿越沙漠的驼队或车队

③ 驼队的首领是一位尊贵的老人，黑色的眼睛露出犀利的目光。dignified: *a.* 高贵的，尊贵的。fierce: *a.* 锐利的，犀利的

④ 他的命令是驼队至高无上的法律。

⑤ 我衷心地感谢你的热情款待。grateful: *a.* 满怀感激的

⑥ 捋着他的胡须。stroke: *v.* 抚摸，捋



I was traveling across the desert with sheik^① Mahmoud Ibn Moosa and his caravan^② of 90 camels and 19 men. The sheik was a dignified old man with fierce dark eyes^③ and a white beard. His commands were the only laws that the men of the caravan knew.^④

The bearded sheik rode a large white donkey, and his donkey was dignified, too. The sheik treated him as a friend and an equal. They were almost always together all day, and they slept in the same tent every night.

The Bag of Gold

I was carrying with me about 80 pieces of gold, which I kept in a leather bag. I kept the bag in my tent at night, and I put my hand into the bag each morning to be sure that the pieces of gold were safe. On the ninth morning, the bag was not there!

I went at once to find Ibn Moosa. "Mahmoud Ibn Moosa," I began, "for eight days I have been your guest, and I am sincerely grateful for your hospitality^⑤."

Ibn Moosa put his hand on his heart and answered, "To give hospitality to a guest is always my greatest pleasure."

I continued, "I am very sorry to tell you that some trouble has come to me now. As a guest, I must tell this trouble to my host."

I told him about my bag with the 80 pieces of gold. He asked me a few questions, and then sat in silence, stroking his beard^⑥. At last he said, "The caravan will not leave this camp today. Before evening comes,

you will have your gold.”

An hour later my host left the camp, alone. It was noon before he returned.^① Commanding his men not to disturb him for any reason, he disappeared into his tent and closed the flap of the tent behind him.^② I began to be worried about my money. There was only one man who could get it for me, and he was asleep in his tent!

But after dinner my host came slowly from his tent, dressed in his finest clothes. He went to the top of a pile of bags in the center of the camp, and he told me to sit up there beside him. Then, in his dignified voice,^③ he said, “Bring me the men.” The men left the camels and stood in a row in front of him^④.

When all the men were there, the sheik sat in silence, looking at them and stroking his beard. He did not hurry. He looked at each man a long time, and every man looked silently at him, too. At last he spoke,

“Today some trouble has come to my guest, this traveler. To steal is a crime, but when one steals from a guest, the crime is seven times worse. This traveler trusted himself to me. Someone has stolen from him in my home. As no one from outside has been near our camp, the man who stole from this traveler is before me now. He is standing before me while I speak, and he thinks he can hide his crime.”

The old sheik's voice became loud and angry as he spoke of the crime. He said that God himself was commanding him to find the thief and to find the traveler's gold. Then his voice became quiet and dignified again. Stroking his beard, he continued.

The Wonderful Donkey

“My white donkey in my tent,” he said, “is not an ordinary one. He is a direct descendant from the donkey that our Prophet rode.^⑤ My donkey is a very wise one. He always knows the truth; he always tells me the truth, because God tells him what is true.”

The sheik stopped for a minute and looked at each man. Then he said, “My donkey will now tell me who stole the traveler's gold.”

“The donkey cannot speak our language,” the sheik continued, “but when he speaks to me in his language, I always understand. I command each man now to go into my tent alone. Close the flap of the tent so that no one can see you except the donkey and God. Then, I command you, pull my donkey's tail. When an innocent hand touches his tail, he will be silent.^⑥ But when the hand of the thief touches his

① 他到正午才回来。

② 他命令手下的人不要以任何原因来打搅他，然后他进了自己的帐篷，并把门帘放了下来。flap: *n.* 门帘

③ 用他那威严的声音

④ stand in a row: 站成一排

⑤ 它是我们先哲的坐骑的后代。descendant: *n.* 后代，子孙。prophet: *n.* 先知，预言家

⑥ 当清白无罪的手触摸它的尾巴时，它就会默不作声。innocent: *a.* 清白的，无罪的

- ① without mercy: 毫不留情地。mercy: *n.* 怜悯, 可憐
- ② 把手伸出来, 掌心向上。palm: *n.* 手心, 掌心
- ③ 他弯下身来, 把脸放到第一个人的掌心上。
- ④ amaze: *v.* 使……吃惊, 使……惊讶
- ⑤ 那人俯首跪下, 乞求他的宽恕。fall on one's face: 脸朝下倒下。(这里指他俯首跪下。) beg mercy: 乞求怜悯, 请求宽恕
- ⑥ 但我急切地要更多地了解这奇事是怎么回事。be eager to do: 热切地要做某事。miracle: *n.* 奇迹, 令人惊奇的事

tail, the donkey will speak to us all in his language, and we will take the thief and kill him without mercy^①.”

The sheik commanded the man at the end of the row to go first. The man entered the tent, closed the flap and, after a silent moment, returned. The second man went and returned, and then the third. Twelve men entered and returned, and there was still no sound. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen; only three more. Seventeen, eighteen, and now the last man was entering the tent. Surely there would be a sound from the sheik's tent now! But the man went in and came out, and there was no sound. The donkey was not so wise, after all.

But Mahmoud Ibn Moosa said to me quietly, “Do not be worried. It is all right. You will get your bag of gold.”

The Thief

The men were in front of him in a row again, and they were sitting down. “Stand up!” he commanded. They all stood up. “Hold your hands out in front of you, with the palms up.”^② Each man held out his hands. The sheik then went down from the pile of bags and walked slowly to the first man in the row. He bent his back and laid his face on the palms of the first man's hands.^③ After a minute he went to the next man and laid his face on that man's palms. I was amazed^④ when he did this again and again, going from man to man along the row. He came to the twelfth man and laid his face on the man's palms. Suddenly he lifted his face, pulled out his sword and shouted, “You dirty thief! Get that gold, or I will kill you at once!”

The man fell on his face, begging for mercy.^⑤ Then he jumped up and ran outside the circle of camels. He pulled up a stone and came back with my leather bag of gold.

“Give it to the traveler!”

The man put the bag into my hands, and I found that all the 80 pieces were in it. Then the sheik commanded two men to beat the thief. After a minute I begged mercy for him; and, at my host's command, the men let him go. The sheik went to his tent, and the men returned to their camels.

The Sheik's Explanation

I was glad to get my money, but I was eager to know more about this miracle^⑥. As we rode over the desert the next day, I asked my host

to explain.

He looked at me, stroked his beard, and said, "You must not tell my men."

"Of course," I answered.

"Well," he began, "while I was in my tent yesterday, I took some mint^① and put it in water. When the water began to smell like mint, I put the donkey's tail into the water and left it there until his tail, too, smelt like mint. That evening, you remember, each man went into the tent. All pulled the donkey's tail except, of course, the thief. His hand alone had no smell of mint upon it."^②

① mint: *n.* 薄荷, 薄荷叶

② 只有他的手上没有薄荷味。

Exercises

Questions for comprehension

1. When and where do you think the story took place? How do you know? What is a sheik? How do people move from place to place at that time?
2. What is the sheik like? Is he riding a camel? Why do you think the narrator gives a special description of the donkey?
3. How does the narrator come to travel with the caravan? Can you guess what kind of person he is?
4. What happened to the narrator's bag of gold one day? What did he decide to do? Did the sheik promise to help him?
5. Did anyone of the sheik's followers confess that he had stolen the money? What was the next thing the sheik did to help the narrator recover the gold? What was his plan? Did the plan work? Did the sheik find the thief?
6. Did the white donkey have anything to do with the solution of the problem?
7. Do you think the narrator is someone familiar with the Arabian culture?

Questions for discussion

1. People outside the Arabian world often have strong prejudices against Arabs. Does this story in any way fit in with the stereotypes?
2. There are similar stories in many cultures. Do you know any in our own culture?